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COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

No. 85
Sep 2001

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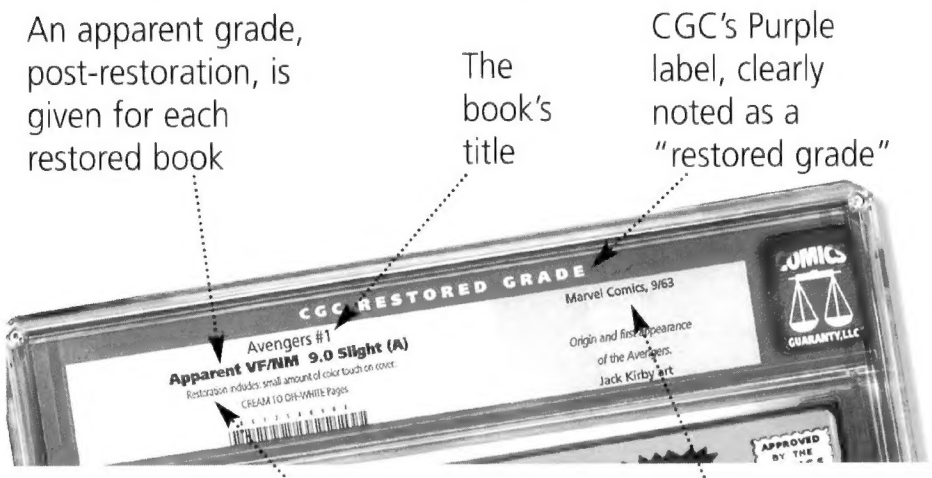
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THE JACK ADLER COLLECTION

The Story: In the late 1980's Randy Tusha and myself, Robert Letscher, met and became friends due to our mutual love for comic books. By 1990 we both were working in Texas for the same comic book wholesaler. That was when we first encountered the Jack Adler art collection. It is a collection of over 2,000 prime examples of cover production art and one of a kind original hand colored covers by DC Comics, mostly from 1967-1974. Jack Adler is a recognized name among the comic book collecting community. He was an editor, inker, award winning colorist, and even headed up the art department for DC comics during much of his lengthy tenure which ran from the early 1950s to the mid 1980s. All of DC's core titles are well represented in the collection, including: Superman, Batman, Flash, Lois Lane, Teen Titans, etc. Also represented are the romance, war, and sci-fi titles DC published such as Young Love, Secret Hearts, Girl's Romance, Our Army at War, Our Fighting Forces, G.I. Combat, From Beyond the Unknown, Strange Adventures, and many more. Many of the cover pieces feature art by Jack Kirby, Joe Kubert, Gil Kane, Carmine Infantino, Neal Adams, etc.

Our boss at the time had recently purchased the collection from the Jack Adler estate. He sold a few of the pieces and then it was taken off the market for the next 7 years. In 1997, Randy attempted to purchase the collection from our former boss. Little did he know, he was literally about 12 hours too late, as it had just sold as a lot to another buyer. He later found out who bought it and tracked it down again in 1998. It would take another 22 months before the final purchase would be made.

In November 1999, Randy contacted me and asked me to join in the purchase of this great find. I agreed to do this and began an intense negotiation process that would span over 4 months with numerous phone calls, faxes, e-mails, offers, and counter-offers. Eventually our persistence and patience paid off. Finally in late February 2000, we were able to achieve an agreement and we made the trip to California. The following day, we happily returned to Arizona, like kids on Christmas morning, with one of the most exciting and unique collections we'd ever seen.

Now, Randy and I would like to offer some of the most noteworthy examples from this significant historic find, to the public for purchase. There are three distinct categories of art in the collection. Since these art pieces were part of the editorial process they can include tack-holes, indentations from a paper clip, staple-holes, pencil notations, and/or minor edge wear. For more helpful details about the Jack Adler Collection please check out the multi-page article also located in this very magazine you hold in your hands.

APPROVAL COVERS (aka cover proofs):

Action Comics #360 (Supergirl and Superman, 80 Page Giant cover) - $225.00
Action Comics #372 (Adams/Error: Blank DC Bullet!) - $125.00
Adventure Comics #379 (Adams Superman/Atom iss.) - $125.00
Adventures of Bob Hope #102 (girl cage dancing, monsters on cover) - $100.00
Adventures of Jerry Lewis #98 (Jerry meets the park monster) - $85.00
Adventures Of Jerry Lewis #108 (Camp Wack-A-Boy) - $70.00
Atom #30 (Gil Kane/Atom vs. Bat!/DC Checkerboard) - $75.00
Atom #36 (Golden Age vs. Silver Age Atom) - $225.00
Batman #222 (Neal Adams, Beatles cover) - $195.00
Binky's Buddies #3 (Binky gets lucky with the girls) - $80.00
Blackhawk #241 (Cool 12-center/White Cover!) - $70.00
Demon #7 (Kirby, Etrigan vs. Witchboy Cover!) - $150.00
Demon #16 (Kirby! Etrigan Bondage/Sorceress Cover!) - $150.00
Brother Power the Geek #1 (Joe Simon cover) - $225.00
Challengers of the Unknown #68 (Neal Adams cover, small chip corner) - $100.00
Detective Comics #384 (Batman and Batgirl) - $150.00
Doom Patrol #118 (Two-Face Villainess/Green Cover!) - $85.00
Falling in Love #106 (Peter asks the wrong question) - $60.00
Fox and the Crow #106 (Drucker(?), Stanley & Monster!)- $70.00
From Beyond The Unknown #10 (Anderson/64-pg Giant) - $75.00
From Beyond the Unknown #22 (Anderson!, Photo cvr) - $75.00
G.I. Combat #132 (Joe Kubert WWII/Haunted Tank!) - $95.00
Girls' Romances #129 (with Error: No Cover Price!) - $85.00
Hawk and the Dove #3 (Gil Kane art, Dove battles the police) - $85.00
Inferior Five #1 (1967 First Issue! Checkerboard Banner)$250.00
Inferior 5 #10 (Superman, Spiderman, Fantastic Four cover) - $125.00
Kamandi #4 (Jack Kirby/Tiger-men! Bright Red Cover) - $125.00
Leave it to Binky #64 (Binky and a Girl get treed by a bull) - $65.00
Metal Men #29 (Andru & Esposito Cvr! Robot-Eater!) - $85.00
Metal Men #33 (the Metal Men are hunted by the cops) - $85.00
Metamorpho #10 (First Element Girl! Checkerboard-c) - $100.00
Mystery In Space #110 (Dragons and the Pied Piper) - $135.00
Our Army At War #183 (Kubert Rock! Blank DC Bullet!) - $100.00
Secret Hearts #116 (Man-stealing Sisters in Nightgowns) - $65.00
Secret Hearts #125 (Blonde Confronts Player! 12-center) - $55.00
Secret Six #4 (Great Layout, Full Team! Orange Cover!) - $70.00
Secret Six #5 (Teammates attack each other) - $70.00
Showcase #69 (The Maniaks, 1960's Rock group) - $90.00
The Spectre #6 (obvious cover correction was made) - $150.00
Stalker #1 (Steve Ditko & Wally Wood! 1975 First Issue!) - $200.00
Stanley and His Monster #103 (the monster falls in love) - $70.00
Star Spangled War Stories #148 (Joe Kubert, Enemy Ace is shot down) - $95.00
Star Spangled War Stories #149 (Kubert Enemy Ace cover) - $95.00
Strange Adventures #206 (2nd Deadman! Graveyard cover!) - $150.00
Sugar and Spike #69 (Sheldon Mayer, Tornado Tot too!) - $85.00
Sugar and Spike #70 (Sheldon Mayer, the kids grow super sized) - $85.00
Sugar and Spike #77 (Sheldon Mayer, Up-Side Down) - $80.00
Superboy #153 (Neal Adams! Cosmic Invaders! 12-cent) $120.00
Superman's Girl Friend Lois Lane #73 (Superman in bondage, Lois uses a whip, KINKY!) - $110.00
Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen #111(Adams Ugly Superman) - $95.00
Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen #119 (Superman/9-Lives!?) - $75.00
Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen #139 (Kirby 4th World! Superman) - $150.00
Swamp Thing #8 (Classic Wrightson Cover!) - $125.00
Swamp Thing #15 (Redondo, Swampy vs. Winged Demon!) - $95.00
Swing With Scooter #17 (Scarpelli Kissing Booth Cover!) - $60.00
Tomahawk #122 (Cowboys & Indians! 12-cent Western!) - $70.00
Weird Worlds #4 (ERB Tarzan, John Carter! Kaluta, Dino.) - $100.00
Young Love #68 (Platinum Blonde Is Well Kept! 12-center) - $65.00

HAND-COLORED ORIGINAL COVERS:

Action Comics #425 (Neal Adams Superman/Atom Issue!) - $140.00
Adventure Comics #410 (Supergirl, 52-pager! Superbaby?!) - $95.00
All Star Western #6 (Great Wash Tone (?) Effects cover!) - $95.00
Atom and Hawkman #45 (Kubert art, heroes as slaves in bondage) - $160.00
Brave and the Bold #103 (Batman & Metal Men) - $160.00
Brave and the Bold #106 (Aparo, Batman & Green Arrow!) $160.00
Detective Comics #427 (Kaluta art, Batman DEAD!) - $225.00
Falling in Love #139 (Paisley print clothes, "hot pants") - $110.00
G.I. Combat #157 (Haunted Tank runs over civilians) - $130.00
G.I. Combat #174 (Kubert, Haunted Tank & Jeb/Fire cover!) - $125.00
Girls' Love Stories #161 (lost love by the ferris wheel) - $95.00
Girls' Love Stories #170 (Bus-station Jilt, 52-pager) - $95.00
Heart Throbs #138 (Cheater Busted, Redhead Sobs! 52-pgs.) - $85.00
Heart Throbs #142 (gossip at the wedding) - $85.00
Legion of Superheroes #1 (Superboy smashes Legion) - $325.00
Our Army at War #252 (Kubert art, Sgt. Rock must kill the German officer) - $150.00
Our Army At War #259 (Joe Kubert, Sgt. Rock vs. Sharks!) - $150.00
Our Army At War #268 (Kubert/ Rock & Easy Co vs. Nazis) - $140.00
Our Fighting Forces #140 (Kubert/Losers Spy On Nazi's!) - $125.00
Secret Hearts #149 (David gets caught cheating) - $90.00
Secret Hearts #150 (Sobbing Blonde Runs Down Beach cover!) - $90.00
Star Spangled War Stories #172 (Kubert, Unknown Soldier) - $140.00
Superboy in DC 100 Super Spectacular #DC-15 (wrap-around Superboy cover) - $350.00
Superboy #186 (Convicts Hold Superboy Hostage, 52-pager) - $135.00
Superboy #189 (Jonathan Kent hangs himself, suicide cover) - $150.00

Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen #147 (a world of "Supermen") - $125.00
Tarzan #215 (Kubert, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Mine Of Hell!) - $150.00
World's Finest #209 (Adams, Superman /Hawkman: Puppets) - $195.00
World's Finest Comics #211 (Neal Adams art, Batman & Superman) - $250.00
Young Love #105 (Jealous Brunette Sobs, Bikini & Beach!) - $95.00
Young Romance #186 (Sexy Redhead In Bikini at Ocean!) - $95.00
Young Romance #202 (Wild Colors, Scarce 100-page DC!) - $150.00

FOUR-COLOR SEPARATIONS FOR COVERS (progressive proofs):

Adventure Comics #425 (Mike Kaluta art, Pegasus vs. a Mountain Climber) - $140.00
Binky #76 (Binky & Peggy's Date Runs Late...! Black Cvr) - $100.00
G.I. Combat #145 (Joe Kubert, Haunted Tank cover) - $125.00
G.I. War #3 (Japanese "Zero" vs. a G.I.) - $110.00
Korak Son of Tarzan #52 (Joe Kubert art, has some water damage) - $95.00
Our Army At War #233 (Kubert Sgt. Rock! Civilians Die...) - $150.00
Our Army at War #265 (Joe Kubert, Sgt. Rock cover) - $125.00
Our Fighting Forces #141 (Joe Kubert art, Losers vs. Pirates) - $120.00
Phantom Stranger #27 (great Shadow style cover, water spot left edge) - $125.00
Plastic Man in DC Special Presents #15 (bright yellow cover, great cover) - $150.00
Secret Origins #4 (Kid Eternity and Vigilante) - $110.00
Shazam #12 (Capt.Marvel 100-pager! Marvel Family/Sivana) - $175.00
Star Spangled War #157 (Kubert, Sgt. Rock, Unknown Sold.) - $200.00
Swing With Scooter #35 (Goldberg/Scarpelli Rock Band Cvr) - $100.00
Tarzan #224 (Joe Kubert, Tarzan in bondage) - $175.00
Wanted #9 (Superman & Sandman Cover! Correction Noted) - $150.00

MATCHED PAIRS (Hand-Colored Cover With Approval Cover!):

From Beyond The Unknown #18 (Kaluta, Space-Hitchhiker!) - $200.00
Strange Adventures #233 (Murphy Anderson, Giant-Size Iss.) - $200.00
Superman #247 (Adams? Superman On Trial, Giant-Size Iss.) - $300.00
Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane #118 (Lois is stalked by the "Madman") - $195.00
Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane #119 (Superman cover! Giant) - $225.00
Weird Worlds #10 (Kaluta, Iron Wolf vs. Giant! Black Cover) - $175.00

BECAUSE OF THE UNIQUE NATURE OF SUCH ITEMS, PLEASE CONFIRM ORDERS PRIOR TO SENDING PAYMENT. PAYMENT MUST BE RECEIVED WITHIN 7 DAYS.

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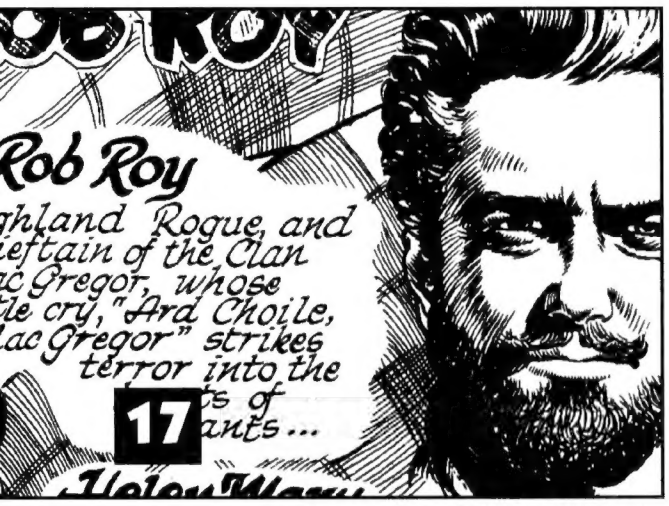

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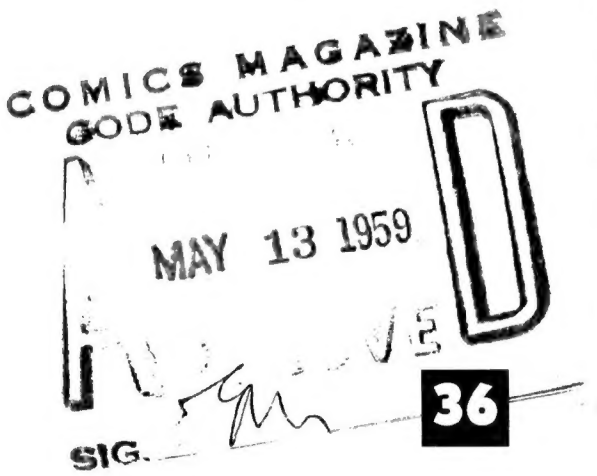

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

San Diego Memories

What do you think of when I mention the San Diego Comic Con? I'll bet the answer depends on your age and how long you have been collecting. When I think of San Diego, my brittle old brain calls up images of the El Cortez Hotel, with its glass-fronted elevator that went up and down on the outside of the building, the 18th floor where all the dealers had their tables, the little Italian restaurant a few blocks away, and the thrill of seeing collectibles that I had only read about before. The San Diego Comic Con of thirty years ago, a small group of collectors coming together to buy, sell, and trade, not only before slabbing, even before mylar! Some comic books were in plastic bags, and many were just bare naked. Stroud and Alexander were there, and Dale Manesis, Bruce Hamilton, Gary Carter, Bob Overstreet, and of course Bud Plant with his van full of books. I guess it really was thirty years ago, but it's hard to believe because the time has just flown by.

Just getting back home from this year's San Diego Con, in the huge convention center, I'm wistfully remembering those good old days back in the early 70s, when the dealers who were there had been to earlier conventions in Dallas, Oklahoma City, or Chicago. The Phil Seuling convention in New York City, usually around the 4th of July, saw them all together at the old Statler-Hilton Hotel. Back then, after the Seuling con, we'd thread our way out to San Diego by way of smaller conventions along the way. Robert Brown, Don Maris, Bart Bush, and Eric Groves in Oklahoma, Burrel Rowe and Joe Bob Williams in Texas, and so on...it was like a continuing summer vacation. One of my greatest memories was in Dallas, around 1973. I had been looking high and low for some *Flash Gordon* original art by Alex Raymond, and it was very hard to find. I knew that Al Williamson had several, but wouldn't part with them. At this point, I had not even *seen* a Raymond *Flash Gordon* original!

That day, in Dallas, a young fellow came up to me and asked if I wanted to see some Raymond original art. We went up to his room where he started pulling originals out from under his bed, absolutely super pages from 1935, 1936, peak-period stuff, and early *Prince Valiant* originals by Hal Foster...it was too much to see all at once! This particular year the Dallas show was a week or so earlier than the Seuling show in New York, so I called all the known Raymond collectors...about six or seven of them...and told them of the find. We ended up buying them all and splitting them up after the New York con. And now, almost thirty years later, those originals are all over the globe. And it all goes to prove that, like the other fellows mentioned above, I'm gettin' old!

Speaking of typos, I have always been obsessive about having them in any of my publications. I am the world's best typo finder, and next time, I'll tell you my favorite Bruce Hamilton-typo story. But just so no one will be disappointed, I am starting a new policy with this issue of *CBM*. I will be putting two or three typos in each issue, and challenge you, the reader, to find them. There will be a prize for the readers who discover them first and bring them to my attention. Just e-mail me and point out the typo, and if you are the first to find it, you're the wiener.

Russ

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

STEPHEN A. GEPPI
President and Chief Executive Officer

JOHN K. SNYDER, JR.
Chief Administrative Officer

RUSS COCHRAN
Editor & Publisher
cbm@gemstonepub.com

J.C. VAUGHN
Executive Editor & Associate Publisher
ads@gemstonepub.com

ARNOLD T. BLUMBERG
East Coast Editor
barnold@gemstonepub.com

PAT CALHOUN
West Coast Editor

BILL BAKER
JENNIFER CONTINO
MICHELLE NOLAN
MIKE WILBUR
Columnists

ED ROCK
Production Manager

PRICING & MARKET REPORTS
ROBERT M. OVERSTREET
Senior Pricing Editor

MICHAEL NAIMAN
Market Reports Editor
mnaiman1@home.com

MARK HUESMAN
Pricing Coordinator
feedback@gemstonepub.com

ADVERTISING
Toll Free (888) 375-9800
Ext. 249 or Ext. 413
ads@gemstonepub.com

BRENDA BUSICK
Creative Director, Ext. 404
bbrenda@gemstonepub.com

RESEARCH
JOE McGUCKIN
mjoe@diamondgalleries.com

CUSTOMER SERVICE & ADMINISTRATION
Toll Free (800) EC-CRYPT
Or (417) 256-2224
cbm@gemstonepub.com

ANGELA MEYER
Traffic & Operations Manager

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FRAZETTA MUSEUM

GRAND OPENING 2001

by Dave Winiewicz

The grand opening of the new FRAZETTA MUSEUM took place on Saturday, June 9, 2001. In a word, it was "magic" from beginning to end. The 88-acre Frazetta estate in East Stroudsburg, PA, was meticulously groomed and the lush landscape provided a remarkable backdrop and atmosphere for the day's events. A full squad of security guards was in place to screen the guests and protect the paintings inside the museum throughout the day. Even the guards were jovial and blended right into the spirit of the day. The only requirement was to enjoy oneself.

The ribbon is cut and the Frank Frazetta Museum is open for business (all photos by the author)

I arrived early and spent some time with Frank in his studio. He was trying to repair an old camera which he received the day before. He was a bit apprehensive about the event because of the demands that people generally make during this type of outing. I told him to relax, gather his strength, and just "have fun." I knew he would be totally energized by the friends, family and fans. This opening would supercharge his vitality. I recalled the great time we had in San Diego during the 1995 convention and I predicted this would be a similar experience.

The gates officially opened at noon and the cars began to pour in. They were first greeted by a large stone gargoyle in the entranceway announcing the direction to the Frazetta Museum. This was a nice touch. A long, winding, heavily-treed driveway leads to the museum itself. The museum is a single-story neo-Moorish/Spanish-style building with overtones of Krell architecture (remember *Forbidden Planet?*). The massive wooden entrance doors are guarded by a large ironwork lattice of external gates. Visitors encounter, after a short stroll up the serpentine walkway, stylish stone lions. In short, it is a lovely and pleasing combination of the conventional with the unconventional.

The original idea was to have people mill about the grounds and take pictures for an hour before the museum opened. However, the decision was made to open the doors immediately and let everyone spend time savoring the originals. It was a very bright day with low humidity; the weather was perfection. To add to the ambience Ellie Frazetta contracted with a three-piece woodwind ensemble from Ohio. The entire day featured subtle classical music delicately winding through the tables and trees, providing a pleasant background to all the afternoon events. On this day, even the air had texture and resonance. The entire setting was almost ethereal. A large white tent was erected to provide shade and a central gathering place for conversation and fun. There was an open bar, a fountain of flowing punch, and nonstop hors d'oeuvres. The Frazetta family did not miss a single detail; everything was handled and presented with class and grace.

The entire day was filmed by the Cinemachine documentary crew. They set up shop under a large tree and quietly and professionally filmed as much as they could. I believe they captured all significant moments and interviewed several people to get their initial reaction to seeing Frank's originals for the very first time. Five members of the crew were present and working hard: Lance Laspina, Jeremy diFiore, Kevin Rasel, George Davis, and Jamie Bresner. The full documentary about Frazetta's life and art is scheduled for a December, 2001, release. This will be followed-up with an expanded version on

Frank Frazetta and the author, among the fabulous oils in the new museum

DVD with behind-the-scenes action and plenty of artwork. Everyone is excited about this project; it is long overdue.

The museum was cleared and closed at 2:00 pm. Frank appeared about 2:30 pm and was greeted by a good round of spontaneous applause. He went to the door of the museum to do the actual ribbon cutting. Frank Jr. cornered me and asked me to say a few words. I proudly announced that this museum was the new home of creative imagination and that there will never be another Frazetta. Frank cut the ribbon, I shook his hand and congratulated him on this latest achievement. Then he was ceremoniously led into the museum to meet the guests and pose for photos. The reception line stretched out of the museum into the grounds; everyone wanted to shake hands with Frank and just say "thank you." Frank was very accommodating; he shook everyone's hand, answered questions, smiled for an endless round of pictures, and seemed to delight in the whole ambience. Family, friends, and collectors from around the world were in attendance. All sections of the United States, and Europe, were represented.

It was an exceedingly well-behaved and cosmopolitan group. I was personally quite gratified that Frank could experience the full-scale intensity of the adulation. I could see his spirit lift and blossom; he loved it—and so did every single person there. At this point, even the art was secondary. The outpouring of love, awe and thanks had to be seen to be appreciated. Here was the magical presence of a truly great man, in the flesh. Afterwards, many people came up to me and said it was one of the greatest highlights of their lives. Just to be able to be in the presence of a man who has accomplished so much, given so much pleasure, who has touched the world with his brush—quite awe-inspiring and a little intimidating.

Frazetta is the real thing: creativity personified. In spite of his numerous medical problems (and they are considerable) Frazetta stood there and greeted every single guest. It was an impressive physical feat for someone in his condition.

Frank and Dave visit with Ralph Bakshi, who collaborated with Frank on the feature film **Fire and Ice**

Artists Mike Kaluta, Steve Hickman, Ralph Bakshi, Joe Jusko, Angelo Torres, Nick Meglin, Mike Bair, Mark Texiera, Daren Bader and others were all there. Many major, heavy-hitter collectors were also there, such as Chris Wrenn, Joe and Nadia Mannarino (of All Star Auctions), Ted Lanting, Henry Huie, Pete Koch, Howard and Jane Frank (from Worlds Of Wonder Gallery), etc. James Bond (yes, that's his name) was there and set up a small exhibit of rare comic books and Frazetta ephemera. James also had a preview copy of the forthcoming *Definitive Frazetta Checklist*; a comprehensive summary of everything Frazetta has had published. This book will be a "must" for all Frazetta collectors.

Everyone was well-dressed and all the women looked gorgeous, many fashionable gowns and flowing trains were in evidence. The women were like living flowers that moved gracefully over the grounds. Frank's daughters, Holly and Heidi, were simply ravishing on this day. Both have sparkling personalities and add a touch of class wherever they are. Vivacious Ellie was resplendent with her blazing blond hair. The

Frazetta grandchildren were all meticulously dressed in little suits and dresses. They provided a charming note of vitality as they flitted from spot to spot. They were extremely well-behaved and courteous. Frank and Ellie were justifiably proud of them.

It is difficult to describe, but most people were walking around in what we might characterize as a beatific state of bliss. There was a look of joy, happiness, contentment, and collegiality on everyone's face. It was like a giant family get-together without all the problems and ego. It was a common community of similar emotion and similar taste. What caused it? It had to be a combination of proximity to incredible, uplifting art, experiencing the sparkling 88-acre estate with its almost mystical landscape resonances, meeting Frank and all the emotion that releases, and, finally, the spirited lines of discussion that spontaneously took place everywhere. Everything was elevated; everybody had reasoned reactions and heartfelt opinions. A lot of thoughtful commentary took place. It was intellectually invigorating and hugely satisfying. Everyone was overwhelmed by Frank's oils and the remarkable "presence" that they have, the vitality they exude. His art lives! One person from England commented on the incredible nature of Frank's pen/brush work. He said that the "Executioner" pen drawing was his favorite work and the fact that it was on display in the museum just made his whole trip. Another artist commented on the fact that Frank's handling of ink is so subtle that "the eye can almost touch the hair and feel the textures in his work." This is insightful commentary and completely correct. There were scores of people who approached me and wanted to talk about Frank's pen work. I have always maintained that Frazetta is probably the finest pen/brush artist the world has yet seen. I find that I am not alone in that opinion. Has there ever been anything drawn better than Frank's Canaveral plates from the 1963-1965 period? I have looked throughout the pages of art history and found nothing that compares.

With respect to color work, artist Daren Bader was standing in front of the Warren "Rock God" oil and commented: "My God! Look at that. When Frank gets your eye, he doesn't let it go. He brings you deeper and deeper in the composition; he never lets you leave." Chris Wrenn commented on the fact that the oils are so rich in color and subtle texture that they can only be appreciated in the original. Reproductions can only fail. Again, these are spontaneous outpourings of art insight and they led to other dialogue,

Reception for the artist in the museum interior

nonstop aesthetic discussions of the highest order. What fun!

After the museum reception, everyone retired to the tent for drinks and a little rest. (Ellie Frazetta decided to close the museum and, as a special surprise, bring out an additional 25 oils later in the afternoon to re-energize the guests. What a great idea!) For about an hour people simply mingled, drank, nibbled and told stories.

I was with Ralph Bakshi and Frank as Ralph explained how hard they worked on the *Fire and Ice* cartoon during the 1980s. Bakshi recalled how "difficult" it was to get a suitable model for Teegra—the lead female character. They had an open casting call and interviewed models, mostly undressed, for a full day. After such a grueling day they still couldn't agree, so they decided to add another day! Yes, being a cartoonist is a tough life.

Did you know that two of the background painters on *Fire and Ice* were Jim Gurney and Thomas Kincaid? Both went on to great fame and fortune.

Another story concerned Frank's physical prowess. The stuntmen had a scene where they had to run down a steep hill. They couldn't do it. They looked awkward and graceless. Their movements weren't "primitive" enough. Well, Frazetta ran up the hill and then savagely and beautifully and properly raced down the hill. He showed them. Ralph said the stuntmen were struck numb by the prowess of Frank and his ability to perform fierce and extreme actions. The brute physicality of Frazetta is an important key to understanding his artwork.

The next step was dinner, buffet-style, with delicious helpings of pork, seafood lasagne, salad, and other gourmet-quality dishes. Before dinner I was honored to deliver the official toast. I didn't write anything down; I planned to speak from the heart. Here's an imprecise paraphrase of what I said:

"I am honored to be giving this toast. It is a special day and certain things need to be said. A toast is really a public gesture of respect and thanks. With that in mind, I have many thanks to make. First of all, I wish to thank the entire Frazetta family for their gracious hospitality in staging this incredible event. You could not have done a better job. A big 'thank you' goes to all the fans and friends of Frank who took the time, made the effort, and spent the money to attend this event. An artist is nothing without an audience and Frank should feel himself blessed with the best fans in the world—tenacious, smart, and loyal. I couldn't imagine an artist having more passionate fans. My next really big 'thank you' goes to Ellie Frazetta, who is responsible for the fine building before us. It's always been Ellie's dream to have a museum to showcase her husband's work; this is the third one, the best one, and the last one. It's because of Ellie Frazetta's vision, tenacity, hard work, and...MONEY, that we have this beautiful building. She has sacrificed a lot over the years to provide the world with this gift. We owe her a great deal.

And, finally, we come to the real reason everyone is here—Frank Frazetta, a great man who has done great things. We are all here because Frank has touched us; each of us has been touched deeply and uniquely. What does it really mean when an artist like Frank touches us? It means that we have been expanded, enriched, and energized. We become more fully aware of what human beings are, the possibilities within human nature. We become more fully human. Frank's art teaches us about ourselves. That is the power of a great artist like Frazetta. And let us remember that Frank's art is not all darkness and thunder and such things. Frank knows that the world is much too serious a place to take seriously, that is why we who know him best, know that the humorous, light side of Frazetta is the real Frank. Look at all those delightful watercolors with funny subjects. That's the real Frazetta! So on behalf of everyone here, Frank, I just want to say that—we all thank you, we love you, and may you live for a hundred years! Raise your glasses everybody and join me in a toast to THE GREAT FRAZETTA!!!"

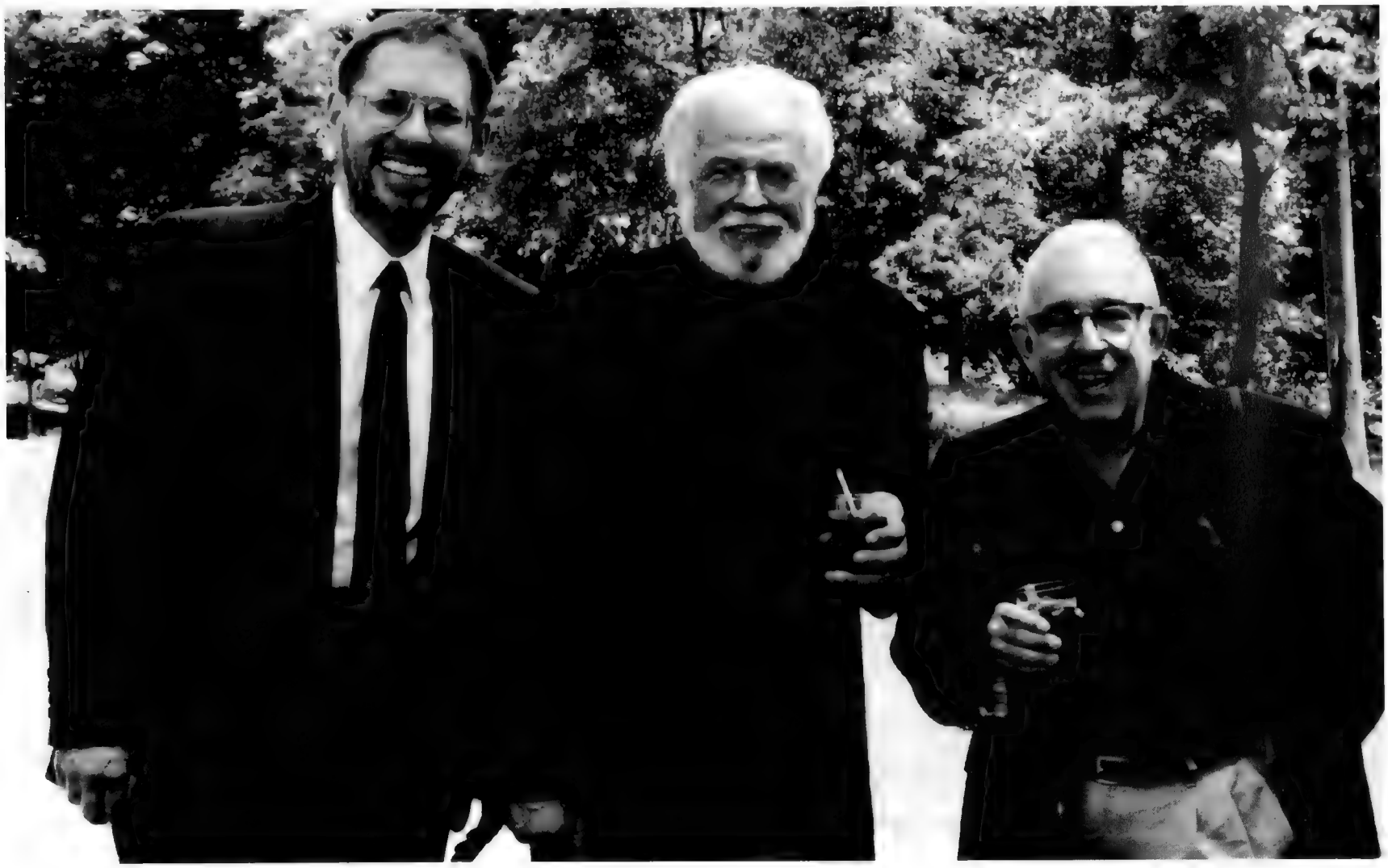
That's not exact, but it captures most of the points and sentiment I wanted to convey. After dinner a number of people presented Frank and Ellie with a wide assortment of gifts, including a painting of the museum (actually done on the grounds during the festivities), a Mickey Mantle rookie card (Frank's favorite all-time ballplayer), and other assorted inscribed items. One major gift was presented by Lance Laspina (who heads the Cinemachine documentary crew). He presented Frank with a leather-bound memory book filled with original artwork and testimonials. Lance has been collecting contributions for the past 2 years and this volume was the result of much hard work. Lance's voice broke with emotion as he handed Frank the book. There were contributions by Bakshi, Daren Bader, Mike Kaluta, Brom, Jeff Easley, a great nude pencil by Dave Stevens and other wonders too numerous to list. Frank was genuinely appreciative and viewed the contents with much delight.

As planned, the museum re-opened at 5:00 PM and everyone entered to see the new 25 oils and to visit their other favorites. Frank entered the museum as well and did some nonstop commentary on selected oils. Frank charmed everyone. Unfortunately, I was so busy socializing that I

missed a lot of Frank's commentary. The museum's gift shop was doing a brisk business with posters, prints, and lithographs. Several originals were also sold including a lovely pencil study for the "Headless Horseman" oil. A number of larger items were made available for sale, including several oils at $125,000 each and two *Famous Funnies* covers at $95,000 each. Everyone was salivating and seriously considering the size of their wallets.

The official activities ended at 8:00 PM and everyone floated off into the sunset, emotionally drained and aesthetically satiated. I don't think anyone's feet touched the ground. One couldn't ask for a richer, more fulfilling day. People grabbed their champagne glasses (beautifully emblazoned with FRAZETTA GRAND OPENING 2001) and went home. Only 150 of these glasses were produced and it already has become a very hot collector's item. Try to find one. The attendees to this event will also be given a specially-printed memory book in the fall. Frank will also initial each copy. A special keepsake exclusively produced to remember a magical time. This is what life is supposed to be!

Finally, I was tapped on the shoulder by the groundskeeper who told me "Frank said to tell you the coffee pot is on." That was an invitation to join Frank in his studio for a post mortem on the day's events. Lo and behold, Nick Meglin and Angelo Torres (Frank's boyhood friends) were already there. What happened next was typical—typical of the kind of special day it was. We managed to launch into a fascinating discussion on the nature of creativity and art. It was a highly spirited and very candid discussion that included raw observations about the real nature of Wally Wood's art, Krenkel, Foster, Raymond, why Lou Fine left comics and changed his style, Lautrec, Pyle, Vierge, Boris, Kelly, Coll and, lastly, Frazetta. Wide-ranging, candid, insightful, funny—I wish we had that one on tape. Sadly, that was the one moment where cameras were not present. Maybe it was best that way. A golden end to a golden day!



Two genuine fleagles and an illegal, the author (left) and Frazetta buddies Nick Meglin (middle) and Angelo Torres

ATLAS COVER ACES!

by Pat Calhoun

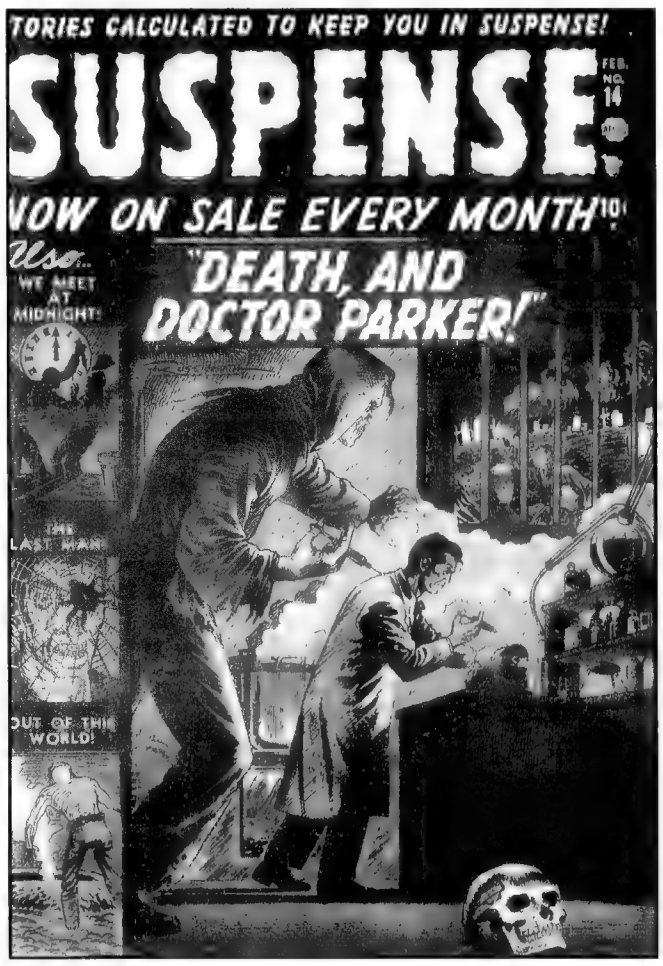
Many fine artists helped to make Atlas a leader in the four-color fantasy of the early 1950s, but three in particular stand out for their huge contributions—both on covers and interiors. Bill Everett, Russ Heath, and Joe Maneely created countless covers that exemplified Atlas fantasy, and gave the books a distinctive presence on the crowded newsstands. Let's take a look at three Atlas classics from that august era that feature an awesome cover by each of these graphic geniuses.

Suspense #14 (Feb 1952) has a high-concept Russ Heath cover whereon a scientist trying to unlock the secrets of life unknowingly is himself an experiment by an ominous fate. He becomes a "guinea pig" in a demonstration of just how big a bummer immortality could be. In "Death and Dr. Parker" a great bio-chemist's assistant kills his mentor and steals his formula for eternal life—hoping to use it on himself and rule the world with the wisdom that centuries should impart. But as the eons pass he finds himself ever more of an outcast and a freak, until in a far-flung future (long past the end of the human race) he attempts a horrible "suicide." Heath also illustrated this grim fable.

Other highlights of this issue are two other tales of unlucky megalomaniacs: "The Last Man," about a worrywart who constructs the ultimate bomb shelter and seals himself up in it when the atomic war has started (but has it?), and "Out of This World," about a super-rich businessman who attains his dream of being the first man to travel in interplanetary space and lives to regret it. There's still a fair amount of "house art" in this early 1952 ish, but editor Stan Lee was quickly coming to realize the value of having many artists drawing with diverse and individualistic styles.

Mystic #7 (Mar 1952) starts off with a luscious and very lurid Joe Maneely graveyard cover. Maneely would spend most of his career at Atlas—a prolific and versatile artist who would die quite young (in 1958) but left behind an immense legacy of awesome work. This cover loosely represents the book's initial story, "The Tomb." This is the tale of a rich old man who decides to fake his death so he can be there to disillusion his relatives when they set out to collect their inheritance—since he's become convinced that's all they want. But the "Hilanus herb" he takes that's supposed to put his body into suspended animation does too good a job—with disastrous results that his ghost discovers. Moody art by Gene Colan breathes some life into this moribund morality play.

"Out of the Night" is one of those great stories that starts off with a fantasy writer trying to drum up a tale for the March issue of *Mystic*. After a hot summer day he sits in his cabin at night, but plotting proves elusive, especially with the distraction of a determined insect buzzing and thumping at his screen door. This goes on for


TORIES CALCULATED TO KEEP YOU IN SUSPENSE!
SUSPENSE
FEB. NO. 14
NOW ON SALE EVERY MONTH 10¢
"DEATH, AND DOCTOR PARKER!"
WE MEET AT MIDNIGHT!
THE LAST MAN!
OUT OF THIS WORLD!

Suspense #14 (Feb 1952) This complex Russ Heath cover still manages to communicate its main idea at a glance: that the experimenting scientist is himself "guinea pig" as Death conducts a bizarre test

several nights, and each time the bug grows larger. He realizes that this would make a good story, but that there's only one way such a yarn would end. Jim Mooney handles the drawing with panache and power.

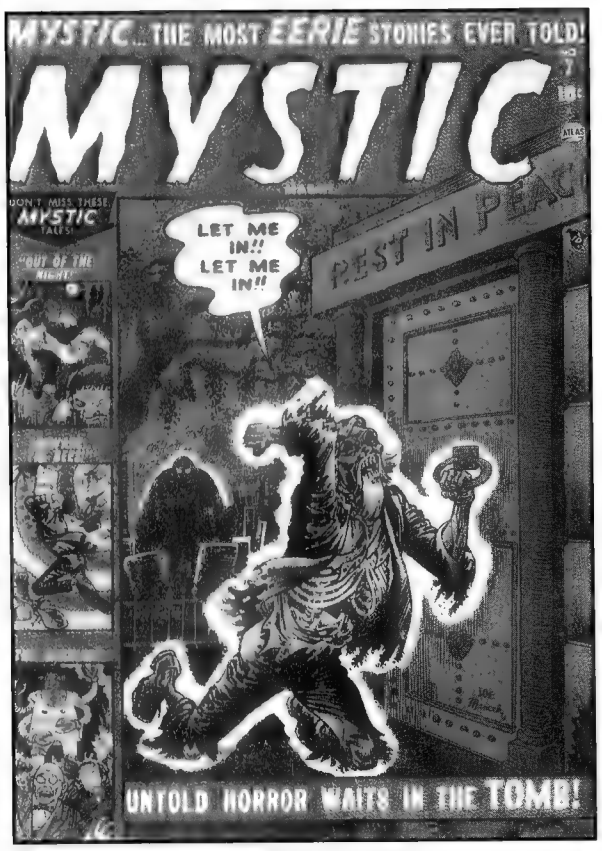
"Beware the Bees" offers more bugs and more Colan art in a predictable but still mildly satisfying four-pager. Despite pedestrian art and a standard "revolt of all things mechanical" beginning and middle, "The Thinking Machines" manages some dizzying spin on an old idea at the end, enough to lift the story to a higher level. All in all, it's a fun issue—with a spectacular cover.

Bill Everett had important work in the very first comic Atlas (then called Timely) ever published: the introduction of Sub-Mariner in *Marvel Comics* #1 (Nov 1939). But it's easily arguable that his fantasy/horror art in the pre-Code years was his best ever, and his superbly spooky cover for *Spellbound* #17 (Sep 1953) supports that thesis. The skeletal folk in the background seem happy, convinced that Miss Meltaway is about to become one of them.

The insides also lead off auspiciously, with Bernie Krigstein doing up "Suppressed Desire"—a wry fable about the perils of psychoanalysis. Then Al Luster ably illustrates more irony as two greedy prospectors hunt uranium in the Congo in "The White Bones." "Fenton's Face" and "The World is Ours" are two more "turnabout" tales—both somewhat amusing. "Goodbye Forever" wraps things up with some voodoo on Haiti as a plantation owner has the local zombie master help him replace his wretched wife with a ripe but duplicitous young dancer. It's the fifth of five "biter bitten" situations, but the predictable plot gets a boost from excellent Joe Sinnott art. And if none of the five stories were tremendous, none were stinkers either—solid Atlas entertainment.

Everett continued doing Atlas covers up until they imploded (after a distribution crisis) in 1957—then shifted from horror to humor and soon landed a job with *Cracked* magazine. Heath gravitated to DC and drew a wealth of first-rate work for them—notably in their war titles. And Joe Maneely met a tragic demise after falling off a Long Island commuter train when only 32 years old. But as time goes on the Atlas pre-Code fantasy books continue to grow in stature, and the many incredible covers these three created are gaining recognition as being among the great achievements in comic art.

Spellbound #17 (Sep 1953) Bill Everett did a bunch of covers with hapless souls losing their flesh, and this is the most graphic and dramatic of the group. Of the three artists discussed here, Everett produced the most Atlas covers


MYSTIC...THE MOST EERIE STORIES EVER TOLD!
MYSTIC
DON'T MISS THESE MYSTIC TALES!
"OUT OF THE NIGHT!"
LET ME IN!! LET ME IN!!
REST IN PEACE
UNTOLD HORROR WAITS IN THE TOMB!

Mystic #7 (Mar 1952) This glorious graveyard scene by Joe Maneely is one of his first and best covers, with a rotting corpse seeking the safety of his tomb as a sinister black figure approaches

FUNNY ANIMAL FUN AND FROLICS

Dell Discoveries Still Can Delight Collectors

by Michelle Nolan

One of the last relatively unexplored comic collecting frontiers continues to be Dell's two-decade run of funny animal comics from the early 1940s through 1962.

You say anthropomorphic animals don't tickle your collecting fancy? Read on with an open heart and perhaps you'll change your mind at least a little.

Although we'll touch on Disney comics here, they're so well-known that at this point we're more interested in the much lesser known funny animal titles so artistically produced by the legendary Western Publishing and Lithographing Company under the Dell imprint.

They include Warner Brothers (*Bugs Bunny*, *Tweety and Sylvester*, *Porky Pig*); Walter Lantz (*Woody Woodpecker*); MGM (*Tom and Jerry*, *Spike & Tyke*); Hanna Barbera (*Yogi Bear*, *Huckleberry Hound*); and various other titles led by Marge's *Little Lulu*.

Have you ever held a glossy, nearly pristine Dell comic? I can remember eagerly plucking them off the stands during the 1950s. Even at the age of eight, I felt as though I was holding a true work of art even compared with other nifty "slick" comic books produced by the other primary publishers such as National (DC), Atlas (Marvel) and Archie (Archie!).

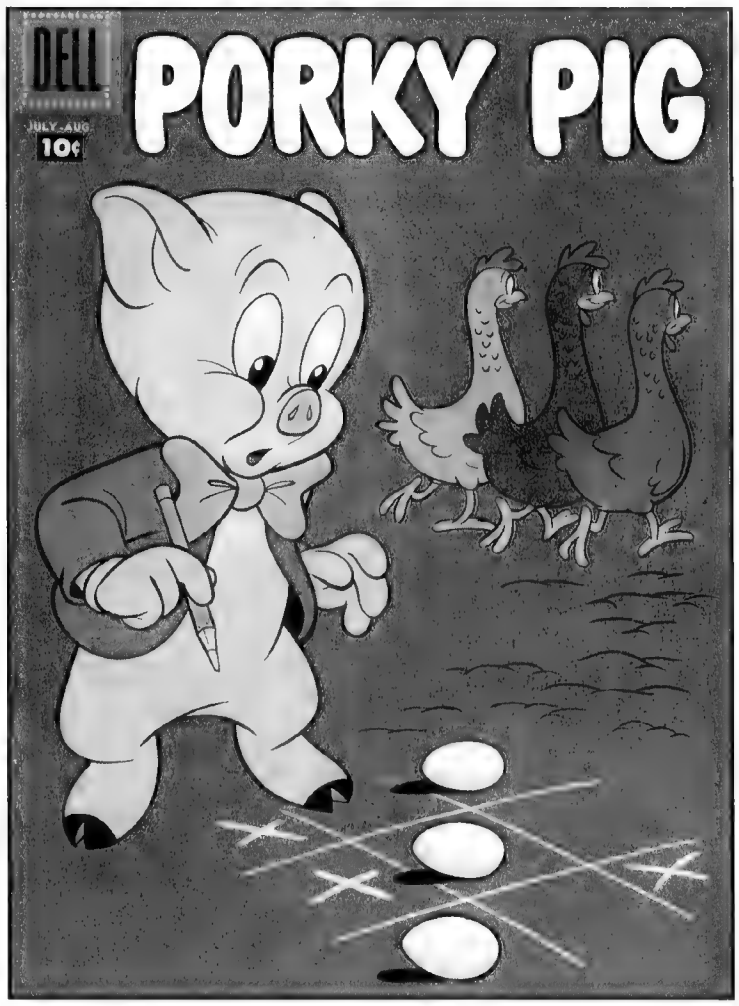
It didn't matter what title or genre you eyeballed from Dell—they were all beautifully produced. The covers were generally spectacular, which is why I'm so thankful that many beautiful old Dell comics remain affordable.

That's why I feel so strongly that one of the great pleasures of comic collecting is sifting through a box or two of Dells. As wonderful as the Gerber *Photo-Journal*s are, most of the Dell issues are not pictured, unlike most superhero, horror and crime comics of the 1940s and 1950s.

That is not criticism. Gerber had room to illustrate only a little more than half of the more than 37,000 or so comics produced through the 1950s (remember, the *Photo-Journal*s also included many popular issues of the early 1960s). Many of the covers Gerber was forced to leave out (or else Gerber would have needed four *Photo-Journal*s, not two!) were Dell titles, especially the funny animal comics.

From my standpoint, that's OK. It just enables me to make more wonderful discoveries as I seek to fill in my runs of affordable Dell titles.

By the way, in my role as a longtime book scout, I've noticed over the past ten years how seldom pre-1970 comics show up at garage and estate sales. This can lead to many misconceptions.



Three heads were better than one on the cover of **Porky Pig** # 59 (Jul-Aug 58)

For example, I recall about five years ago when some guy saw me perusing a worn 1952 *Looney Toons* at his garage sale and tried to tell me what a bargain it was at $10 "because old comics are really rare and there are probably only a few copies of this issue still in existence."

To quote Superman, "What th-?"

I didn't have the heart to try to educate him. I'm sure it wouldn't have done any good anyway.

At any rate, *Looney Tunes* is a great example of what I'm talking about. Only the first 50 issues (through 1945) are pictured in the *Photo-Journal*, leaving so many wonderful covers to be discovered.

Or take Walter Lantz's *New Funnies*. It began with #65 in 1942 (taking over from *The Funnies*), and Gerber illustrates only half a dozen early covers. These are a gold mine of often clever and almost always funny Woody Woodpecker covers.

I love the fact that I've been able to collect more than 1,000 Dell covers not illustrated in the *Photo-Journal*. They are almost always sheer delights. And have you ever thought of how many different ways there are to collect them?

It's interesting to distinguish between the "real" cover themes (when funny animals participate in activities that people could duplicate in real life) and "surreal" cover themes featuring impossible situations.

It's also possible to collect topical covers, featuring themes of Christmas, Halloween, Thanksgiving, summer, winter, back to school, and so forth. As a collector of paper Americana, these are special favorites of mine.

I also love collecting sports-theme covers, of which there are dozens and dozens, perhaps hundreds.

Then there are television covers, outer space and satellite covers, and so on.

I know a collector who likes to distinguish other Dell humor covers in two ways—the "mischief" cover, such as popularized by the conflict between Tweety and Sylvester or Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd, and the "gentle humor" cover, of which the canine likes of Spike & Tyke and Scamp are prime examples. All of these are superb examples of sight-gag humor at its best.

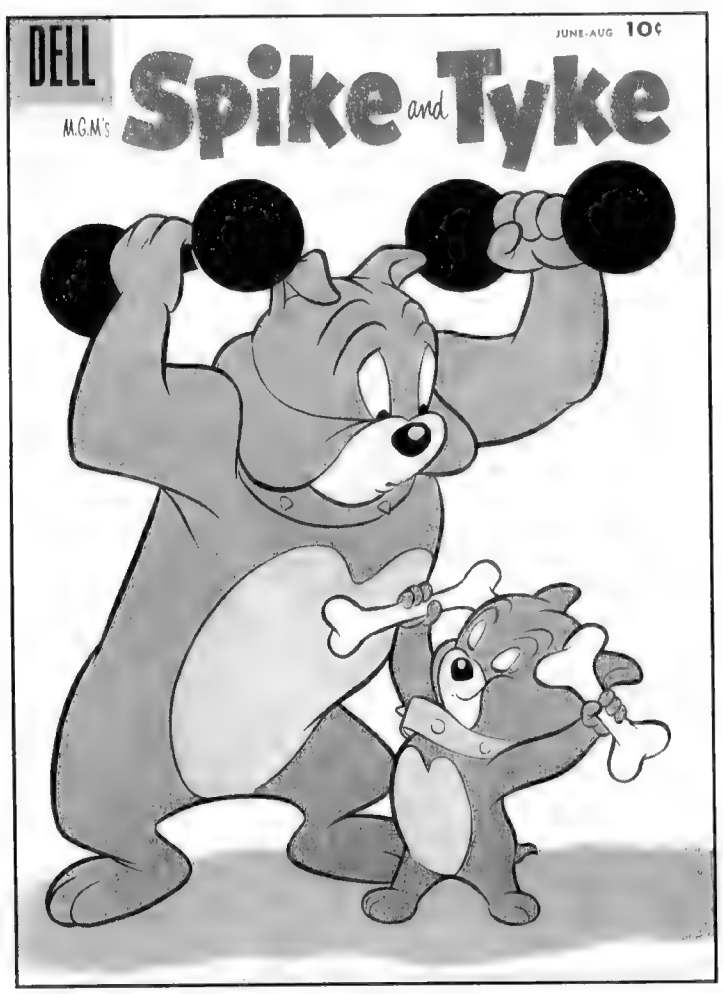
As a child, I often wondered how the gag writers and cover artists (who were sometimes one and the same) constantly came up with new ideas.

I have chosen five of my favorite covers—each of them illustrating a different type of Dell cover—to illustrate this "Nolan's Notebook." Let's see what's behind each of them, and why these make such marvelous collectibles.

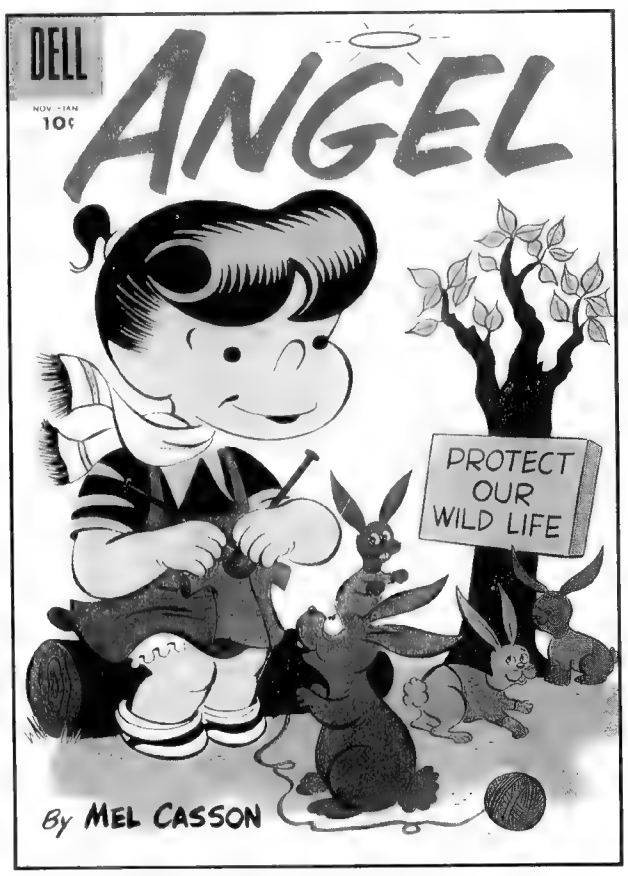
Let's look at *Porky Pig* #59 (Jul-Aug 1958). This is a classic example of a surreal sight-gag—three satisfied chickens strutting away after laying eggs to beat Porky in tic-tac-toe. I hope this kind of humor isn't lost on you—I think it's wonderful. I call this a "gentle surreal" cover, and the best kind of sight gag.

On the other hand, *Spike & Tyke* #10 (Jun-Aug 1957) represents the finest of the "gentle real" covers, what with the adorable Tyke using his bones to imitate Spike's weights. A terrifically imaginative cover!

Like father like son, **Spike and Tyke** style, #10 (Jun-Aug 57)



Angel knits her bit for her furry friends on **Angel** #4 (Nov 55-Jan 56)



Then there's a cross between the "gentle surreal" and the "real"—*Angel* #4 (Nov 1955-Jan 1956). One of our favorite little comic book girls knits sweaters for appreciative rabbits as she literally obeys a "protect our wild life" sign. The 16-issue run of *Angel* (1954-59), based on a little known *Chicago Sun-Times* syndicate strip, is among the most underrated of all humor comics.

One of the cleverest of all topical covers is *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* #224 (May 1959), which takes advantage of the popularity of Disney's then-new half-hour *Zorro* series. Here we have a rare example of three different Disney creations popularized on the same cover, as Donald and his nephews play Zorro dress-up while Chip and Dale sleep in Donald's Zorro hat. I remember laughing like crazy when I saw this one at the drug store! It's a non-Barks cover.

Carl Barks, of course, came up with dozens of brilliant sight-gag Duck covers among the multitude that "The Good Artist" produced. My favorite is *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* #163 (April 1954) with a unique baseball cover. Duck historian Michael Barrier credits the idea to Barks as well as the execution. This one is no less than perfect, with Huey, Dewey and Louie forsaking their music lessons for a game of "instrument baseball." It's an absolute masterpiece, especially the use of the accordion as the umpire's chest protector and of sheet music as home plate.

Incidentally, notice Dell's cover plug for "A 52-Page Comic Magazine." Dell was the last 52-page holdout, with *Comics and Stories* #168 (Sep 1954) being the last 52-page issue along with several other Dell titles of that period. Not all Dell comics ran 52 pages so late into the early 1950s, but several of the most popular titles did.

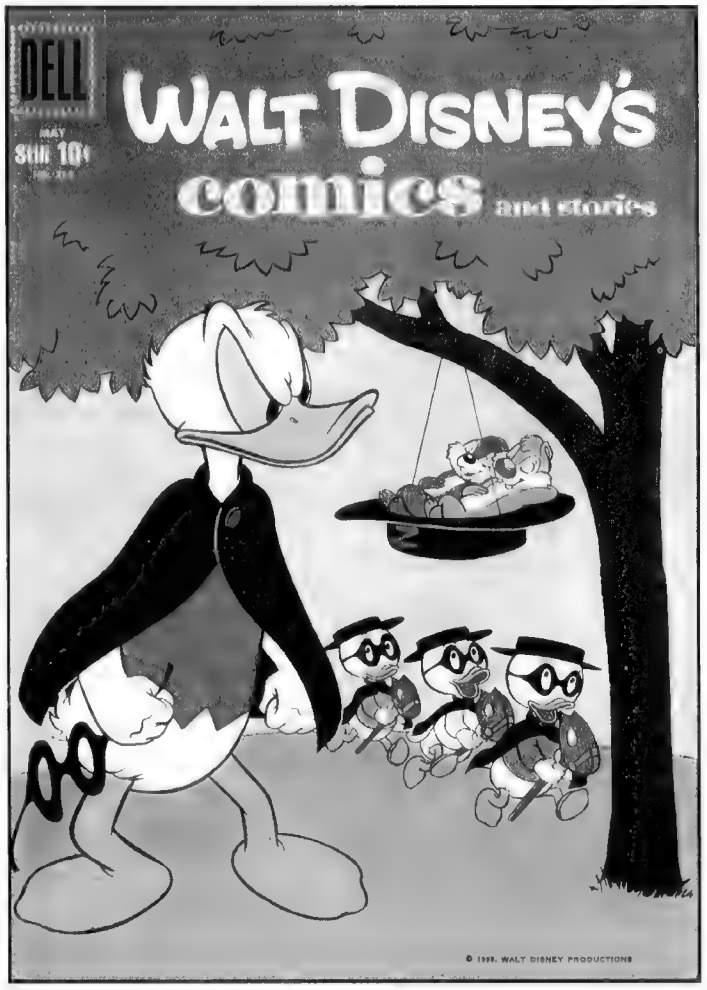
Archie's flagship titles, *Archie*, *Laugh* and *Pep*, mostly ran 52 pages through 1953, although other Archie titles, such as *Betty and Veronica*, *Jughead* and *Reggie*, were 36 pages right from their introduction in the 1949-50 period. Most other publishers, however, discontinued 52-page comics for good in 1951 or 1952.

I've always wondered about these 52-page Dell "holdouts." Can anyone solve this mystery? Adding to the intrigue, the later 52-pagers invariably featured some of the best-selling Dell and Archie titles.

It's also intriguing to note how some of the sight gags still hold up beautifully today, while others were seldom if ever reprinted since they quickly became badly dated.

The best examples are the early television covers, taking advantage of children's innate confusion over the fact that the people on TV could not really see the viewers. For example, *Looney Tunes* #90 (Apr 1949) features Bugs Bunny swinging his bat on a pitcher delivering the ball on TV. On the other hand, the cover of *Comics and Stories* #220 (Jan 1959) still holds up, because Donald has emerged frustrated from the shower to answer the ring of a telephone on TV.

In the earliest commercial TV cover joke I've ever been able to find, Donald Duck surrenders to a televised thief on the cover of *Comics and Stories* #66 (March 1946), wonderfully rendered by Walt Kelly. This cover was produced late in 1945, before the first shows televised by the first two networks—NBC and Dumont (Dumont lasted only until 1954).



Three gay cabelleros and (per usual) ungay Donald when the Zorro craze hit Duckburg in **Comics and Stories** #224 (May 59)

Television as a new form of scientific development had appeared earlier than 1946 in various forms of pop culture, of course, since the medium's experimental beginnings in the 1920s and 1930s. But can anyone cite an earlier commercial TV gag cover than this Donald Duck masterpiece?

Kelly, who did dozens of amusing and amazing covers in the 1940s for *Comics and Stories*, also turned in a beauty for #124 (Jan 1951), showing "Unca" Donald's nephews knitting extremely long Christmas stockings. This was the best kind of extra-creative holiday cover.

Another all-Barks cover, and among my special favorites, the "truant nephews" cover on *Comics and Stories* #104 (May 1949). This classic portrays Huey, Dewey and Louie (can you even imagine it being written as Louie, Huey and

NOLAN'S NOTEBOOK

Dewey?) fishing inches over the state line as truant officer Donald frets. I can't decide whether this is real or surreal. Truly a great sight-gag cover!

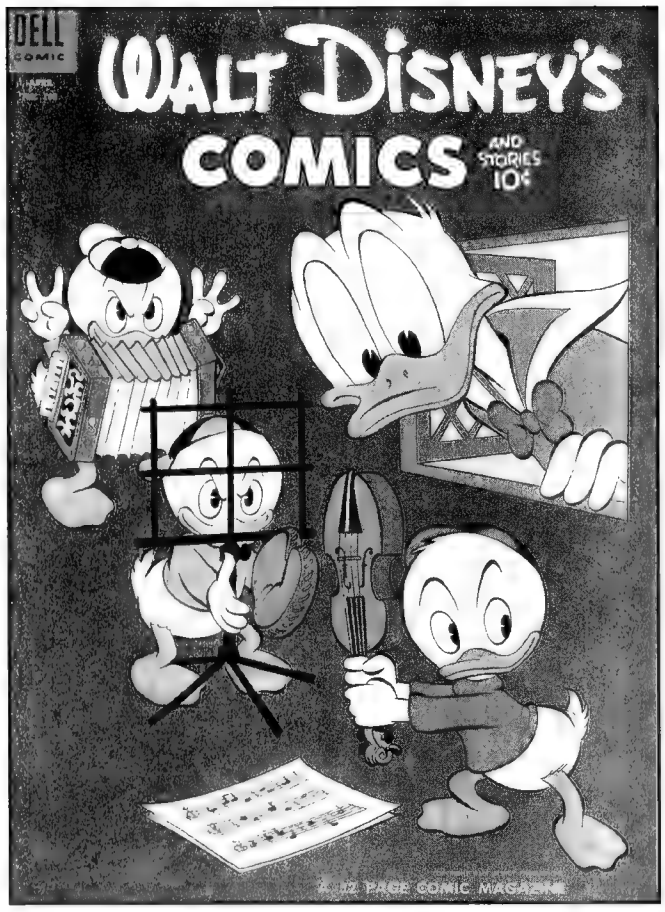
Other covers I love include *Tom and Jerry* #128 (Mar 1955), on which two lovable mice use a telephone as a teeter-totter, and *Woody Woodpecker* #17 (Feb-Mar 1953), on which Woody gets into a sword-fight with a swordfish.

Then there's *Looney Tunes* #162 (Apr 1955), on which Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd set the good old "string traps" for each other. Bugs uses money in a wallet but Fudd, of course, uses carrots.

Finally, how many people remember the classic *Daffy Duck* cover on issue #16 (Jan-Mar 1959). Satellites were only a year old when this one hit the stands and they were all the rage. Appropriately, Daffy is found playing tennis with a satellite!

Speaking of satellites, do you want to know how much harder fourth grade was in 1957 than it is now? In 1957, my fourth-grade teacher chewed me out for misspelling "satellite" with two Ts and one L. You might say she gave me "L" for it! (Sorry, you know you can't get a pun-free dose of "Nolan's Notebook!")

There are many Dell sight-gag covers that I have not seen. Would anyone like to cite their favorites to *CBM*? Until then, keep laughing—it truly is the best medicine!



Is that "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" in the sheet music from the cover of **Comics and Stories** #163 (Apr 54)

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950R	9 1/2 x 12 1/4	Sheet Music, Large Magazines	$31.25	$106.00	$468.00
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775M2	7 3/4 x 10 3/4	Silver/Gold Comics - 1950's-70's	$11.50	$38.00	$165.00
800M2	8 x 10 3/4	Golden Age Comics - 1940's-50's	$12.00	$39.00	$175.00
825M2	8 1/4 x 10 3/4	Super Golden Age Comics	$12.50	$42.00	$180.00
875M2	8 3/4 x 10 3/4	Large Comics, Mag. & Letter	$12.75	$43.00	$185.00
900M2	9 x 12	Standard Magazines	$16.25	$53.00	$225.00
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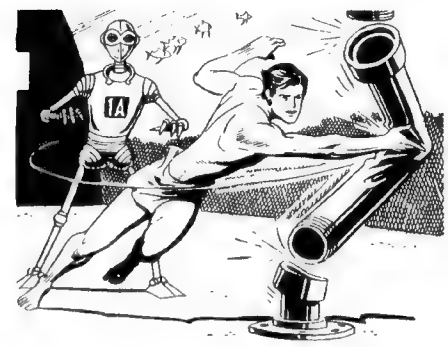
The Unknown Russ Manning



by Peter Bosch

I love Russ Manning's artwork, I really do. I look back on *Magnus, Robot Fighter* and *Tarzan of the Apes* as two of the most beautifully illustrated comic series ever. His was a clean, beautiful style, filled with gorgeous people. He drew things elegantly, and there was so much to appreciate about his style. What most people don't realize is that he also worked on several other titles. For Dell and Gold Key, Russ Manning was drawing comic adaptations of TV shows and personalities: *77 Sunset Strip, Sea Hunt, The Danny Thomas Show, Dale Evans, My Favorite Martian, Wyatt Earp, Ricky Nelson*, and more. They all benefited from Manning's great work.

There were also several movie adaptations that were turned into one-shot comics and these cover the spectrum of his work, from his early style to the peak, and even collaborating with others. Here are four such examples (which include my personal favorite).

WALT DISNEY'S ROB ROY

Dell *Four Color* #544, 1954

This is one of Manning's earliest works, and he took care on the characterizations of the main actors (Richard Todd, Glynis Johns, etc.) While the art is not always recognizable as the Manning we know from the 1960s, you can definitely see the beginnings of the great artist he would become. The issue is solid story from the first page to the back cover. The inside front and inside back covers are in

OH, MY LOVE! YOU MADE A BAD BARGAIN WHEN YOU TOOK ME — A GHOST WITHOUT A HOME — FOR A HUSBAND!
NO, ROB! HAD I KNOWN THIS WAS IN STORE — AND, EVEN WORSE - I'D STILL HAVE WED YOU!
ROB! WHAT — WHO?
PERHAPS, PROBABLY! I MUST HAVE BEEN GLIMPSED, AFTER ALL!
MACKAY! WHERE IS ROB MACGREGOR?
I DO NOT KNOW!
ALLEARN! I MUST LEAVE! SHOULD HE FIND ME HERE —
DO NOT SAY IT, ROB! HURRY AND GODSPEED!
THEN NOTHING WILL REMAIN OF CLAN MACGREGOR SAVE WOMEN AND FATHERLESS BAIRNS! ROBERT MACGREGOR, ONCE I THOUGHT YOU A GREAT MAN! NOW I NO LONGER HONOR YOU!

Upper right, an example of Manning's classic work on Magnus, Robot Fighter; rest of page, samples of the interior art in Dell Four Color #544 (1954, "Rob Roy")

ROB ROY © 2001 WALT DISNEY PRODUCTIONS

Cast of WALT DISNEY'S ROB ROY
Rob Roy
Highland Rogue and chieftain of the Clan MacGregor, whose battle cry, "Ard Choile, MacGregor" strikes terror into the hearts of tyrants...
Helen Mary
whose devotion to Rob Roy is matched only by her love for Scotland...
George I
The German-born King of England who restores to Rob Roy his sword and his name...
Lady Glengyll
Rob's mother who knows full well it's so easy to set the heather on fire... so hard to put it out...
The Duke of Argyll
A stern Scotsman who is willing to wage war in order to insure peace...
Killearn
Leader of the fencibles, who learns that when he abolishes the Clan MacGregor he must reckon with the vengeance of Rob Roy...
The Duke of Montrose
Ruthless English Secretary of State to Scotland who embarks on a man hunt, and winds up getting his nose tweaked...

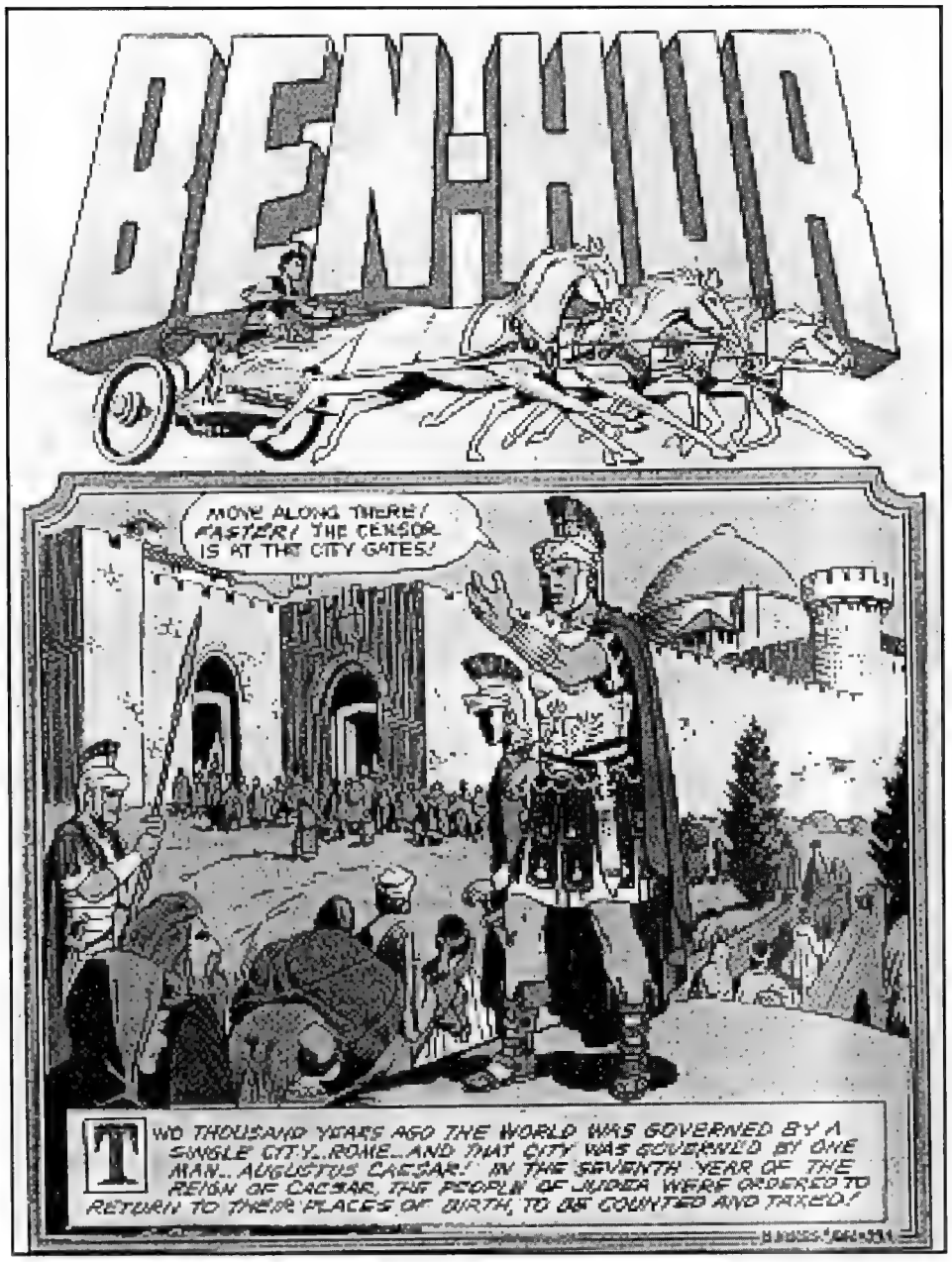
Marvelous inside front cover to **Four Color** #544, it appeared in black and white

black and white and show Manning's great line work to good effect. On a scale of 1-10 (10 being *Magnus*), I would give this a 5.

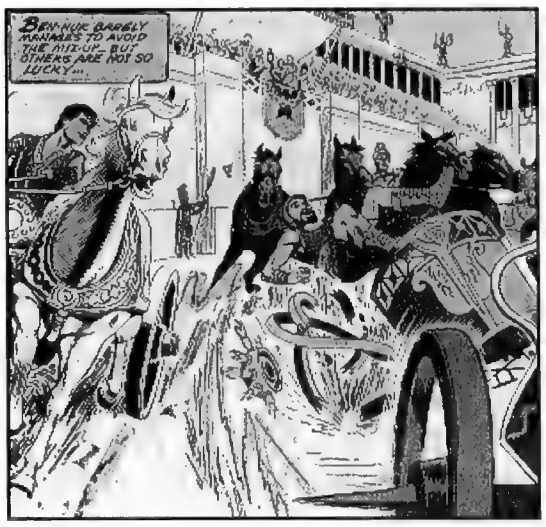
BEN-HUR

Dell *Four Color* #1052, 1959

For this version of the great motion picture, Manning must have had only a few photos to work from. No character in the comic comes close to resembling Charlton Heston, Stephen Boyd, Sam Jaffe, Hugh Griffith or the others (except maybe Jack Hawkins). Costumes are different, as well. Even though the comic story and art do not capture the magnificence of the movie, Manning's art is good and is approaching the wonderful style he would have in a few years. Score: 6.


BEN-HUR
MOVE ALONG THERE! FASTER! THE CENSOR IS AT THE CITY GATES!
TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO THE WORLD WAS GOVERNED BY A SINGLE CITY...ROME...AND THAT CITY WAS GOVERNED BY ONE MAN...AUGUSTUS CAESAR! IN THE SEVENTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF CAESAR, THE PEOPLE OF JUDEA WERE ORDERED TO RETURN TO THEIR PLACES OF BIRTH, TO BE COUNTED AND TAXED!

Miscellaneous interior panels from Dell **Four Color** #1052 (1959, "Ben-Hur"), although actor likenesses are not bang-on, Manning caught the epic visual scope of the story and film



AS THE TEAMS ROUND THE CURVE, MESSALA URGES HIS BLACKS CLOSER, AIMING THE DEADLY HUB TOWARD THE WHEEL OF BEN-HUR'S CHARIOT...
STEADY, MY WHITES... STEADY...
FALL BACK, JUDAH... OR I WILL DESTROY YOU!
NEVER, TRIBUNE! I RIDE FOR THE PEOPLE OF JUDEA!
THE TWO WHEELS GRIND TOGETHER...

BEN HUR © LOEW'S INC.

Walt Disney's Summer Magic
IT IS A GLOOMY DAY IN THE LATE SPRING OF THE YEAR 1911, AS THE THREE YOUNG CAREYS PREPARE TO MOVE AWAY FROM THE LARGE, HANDSOME BOSTON HOUSE THAT WAS ALWAYS BEEN THEIR HOME...
SILLY! PRY YOURSELF AWAY FROM THAT PIANO! THERE'S WORK TO BE DONE!
IT WON'T SEEM LIKE HOME WITHOUT THE PIANO, NANCY!
YOU'RE RIGHT, PETER! I DON'T SEE WHY MOTHER HAD TO SELL IT!
MOTHER SOLD IT BECAUSE WE NEED THE MONEY! BESIDES, THERE ISN'T ROOM FOR IT IN THAT HORRID LITTLE HOUSE WHERE WE'RE GOING TO LIVE!
THE TWO MAIDS HEAR NANCY'S WORDS, AND SADLY SHAKE THEIR HEADS...
I PITY THEIR DEAR MOTHER! ONCE A HAPPY WIFE IN A FINE HOME... NOW A POOR WIDOW WOMAN IN A COTTAGE!

In **Movie Comics Summer Magic** (Sep 63) Manning provided an even more prettified take on the Disney version of a nostalgic look at a period which was, in 1963, not so long past

NANCY! HOW COULD YOU WRITE SUCH ?
LITTLE ONES! BABY BOY WITH RICKETS! HOW I KNOW YOU'VE LOST YOUR MIND, NANCY CAREY!
READ THE LAST PAGE, MOTHER! MR. MORHAM SAYS THE YELLOW HOUSE IS VACANT... AND HE KNOWS MR. HAMILTON WILL BE GLAD TO RENT IT TO US...FOR ONLY SIXTY DOLLARS A YEAR!
IT'S BEEN A LONG, BUSY, HAPPY DAY, AND I THINK WE'RE ALL READY FOR BED!
AGREED! LET'S GO!
SPEAK FOR YOURSELF, NANCY DEAR! CHARLIE AND I WANT TO ENJOY THIS GLORIOUS NIGHT! BUT DON'T LET US STOP THE REST OF YOU!
THINK OF LIVING IN THE BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY! THERE'S ROOM FOR ALL OUR BELONGINGS IN THE BIG YELLOW HOUSE!
WE'LL BE SELF-SUPPORTING! OUR OWN CHICKENS, EGGS, VEGETABLES...
NANCY'S EXCITED EAGERNESS SPREADS TO HER BROTHERS...
CAN WE GO TO BEULAH, MOTHER? PLEASE?
YOUR FATHER DREAMED OF SETTLING DOWN IN THE COUNTRY SOME DAY!
LATER, IN THE BEDROOM NANCY SHARES WITH JULIA...
AT LEAST, SHE COULD PICK UP HER THINGS!
NANCY! I THOUGHT YOU'D BE IN BED!
HOW COULD I? YOU LEFT THIS ROOM IN A TERRIBLE MESS!
DID I? BY THE WAY... I HOPE GILLY CAN GO TO COLLEGE LIKE CHARLES DO. THEN ONE MEMBER OF THIS FAMILY MIGHT AMOUNT TO SOMETHING!
I THINK HE'D LIKE TO KNOW WE'RE TOGETHER IN THE YELLOW HOUSE IN BEULAH!
I KNEW WE'D GO TO BEULAH! I WISHED SO HARD...IT HAD TO COME TRUE!
I'VE BEEN THINKING... MY SCHOOL AND MY FRIENDS ARE HERE IN BOSTON! BEULAH'S A HICK TOWN!
DON'T FORGET, GILLY... ABRAHAM LINCOLN CAME FROM A HICK TOWN!
YOU MAKE ME SICK, JULIA CAREY! I'M SICK OF HEARING ABOUT HER FERGUSONS' FINE CLOTHES AND PROMON MAIDS! I'M SICK OF DOING YOUR SHARE OF THE WORK!
YOU'RE ACTING LIKE A JEALOUS CHILD. BECAUSE CHARLES PREFERS ME! THE FERGUSONS AREN'T MAKE A LADY OF YOU. YOUR MOTHER'S CERTAINLY FAILED!
IT'S TIME YOU KNEW SOME TRUTHS ABOUT THE FERGUSONS, JULIA!

WALT DISNEY'S SUMMER MAGIC

Gold Key *Movie Comics*, 1963

This is my favorite. The film itself was one of Disney's most entertaining, starring Hayley Mills, and Russ Manning has captured the features of the actors as closely as he probably could. Okay, it's not exactly Hayley Mills, but he did show her essence (and made her even prettier). And could anybody ever truly depict the larger-than-life Burl Ives in a simple drawing? Let's not even discuss Michael J. Pollard. With Russ Manning's elegant, romantic style, he was the perfect illustrator for this piece set in 1911. Score: 8.5.

Walt Disney PRESENTS
BULLWHIP GRIFFIN
IT IS 1890, YEAR OF THE GREAT CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH, IN BOSTON AN ATTORNEY HAS JUST READ THE WILL OF ALONZO FLAGG WHICH BEQUEATHS THE BULK OF HIS ESTATE TO HIS GRANDCHILDREN, ARABELLA AND JACK FLAGG. HOWEVER, HIS SERVANTS ARE NOT FORGOTTEN...
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT... HE LEFT ME SIXTY THOUSAND DOLLARS!
AND ME NINETY THOUSAND, AND HALF A MILLION TO GRIFFIN!
HE PROVIDED WELL FOR US ALL!
SO MUCH FOR THE WILL WHICH, I ASSURE YOU, IS PERFECTLY LEGAL AND DULY SIGNED! NOW, FOR THE FACTS...
AND THE FACT IS THAT DURING HIS LATER YEARS, ALONZO FLAGG LIVED NOT ONLY ON BORROWED TIME, BUT...UNFORTUNATELY, ON BORROWED MONEY! HE DIED BROKE! SO, WORRY, ARABELLA!
THE BANK HAS AGREED NOT TO FORECLOSE ON THE MORTGAGE FOR NINETY DAYS!
THAT'S VERY KIND OF THEM!

IT'S A GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT THEN! I'LL SET THE TIME AND PLACE!
NO! NO, BULLWHIP! YOU MUSTN'T!
GENTLEMEN! MAY I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION!
YOU CAN'T PULL THAT LOADED GLOVE TRICK IN A BAREKNUCKLE FIGHT!
ONE WEEK FROM TONIGHT, THE BAREKNUCKLE CHAMP OF SAN FRANCISCO, MOUNTAIN OX, WILL FIGHT THE LEGENDARY BULLWHIP GRIFFIN, THE ONLY MAN WHO EVER KNOCKED HIM OUT! TICKETS ON SALE TOMORROW!
YIPEE! HOORAY!
GRIFFIN! YOU'LL BE KILLED!
HE'S JUST DOING IT TO GET THE MONEY TO SEND US HOME, ARABELLA!
NEXT DAY...
YOU'VE GOT TO STOP THE FIGHT, SAM! GRIFFIN'S NO FIGHTER...HE KNOCKED THE OX OUT WITH A GLOVE LOADED WITH GOLD! MY BROTHER TOLD ME LAST NIGHT!
IT'S TOO LATE TO CALL IT OFF NOW! A LOT OF BETS HAVE BEEN MADE... IF THIS NEWS GET OUT, THEY'D LYNCH YOUR BUTLER BEFORE SUNDOWN!

Many extraordinarily individualistic character actors and second leads were featured in Disney films, Roddy McDowall and Harry Guardino are among those Dan Spiegel and Russ Manning captured in this visual adaptation, **Movie Comics Bullwhip Griffin** (Jun 67)

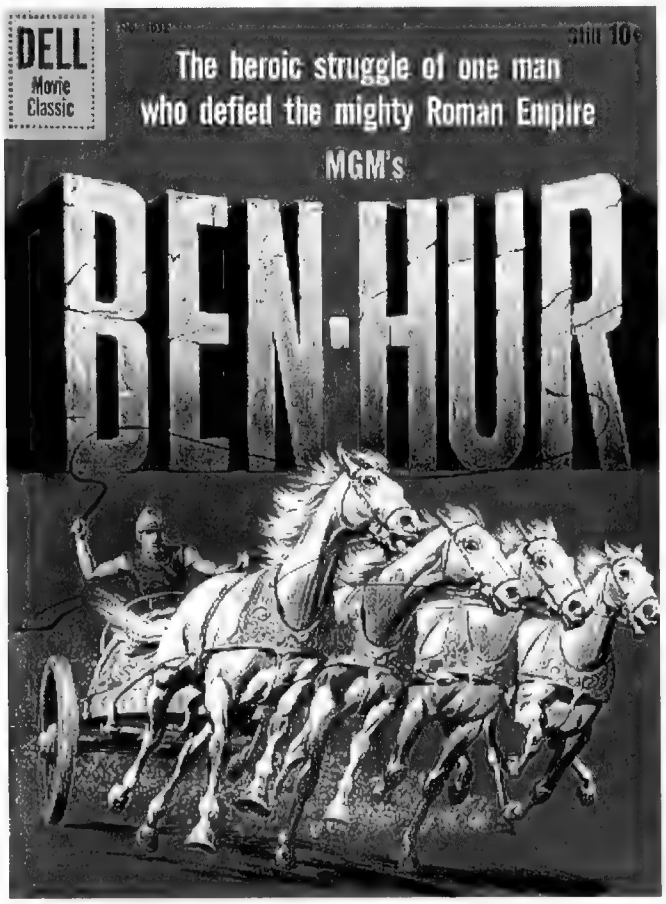
SUMMER MAGIC © 2001 WALT DISNEY PRODUCTIONS

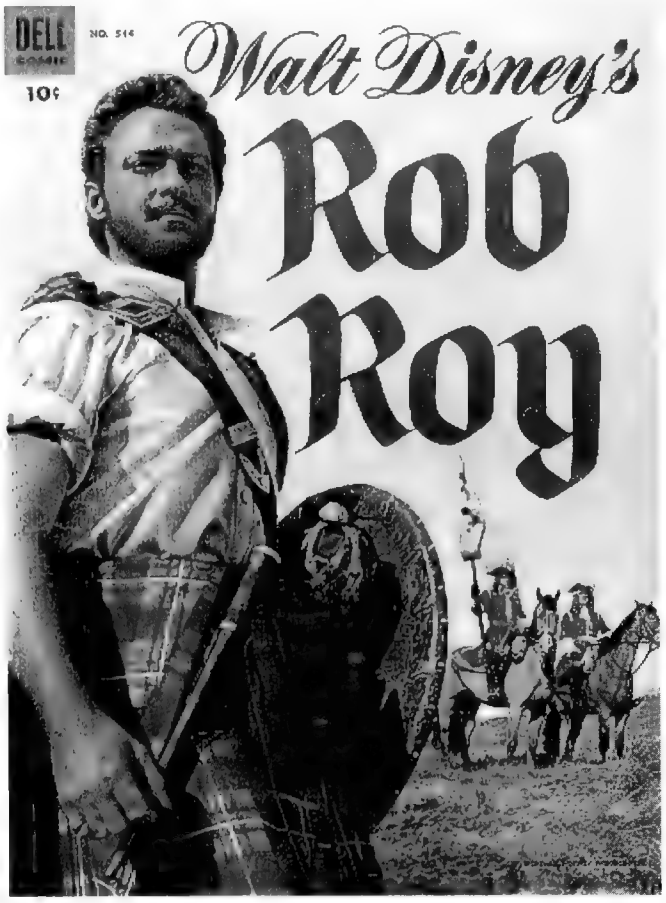
BULLWHIP GRIFFIN © 2001 WALT DISNEY PRODUCTIONS

WALT DISNEY PRESENTS BULLWHIP GRIFFIN

Gold Key *Movie Comics*, 1967

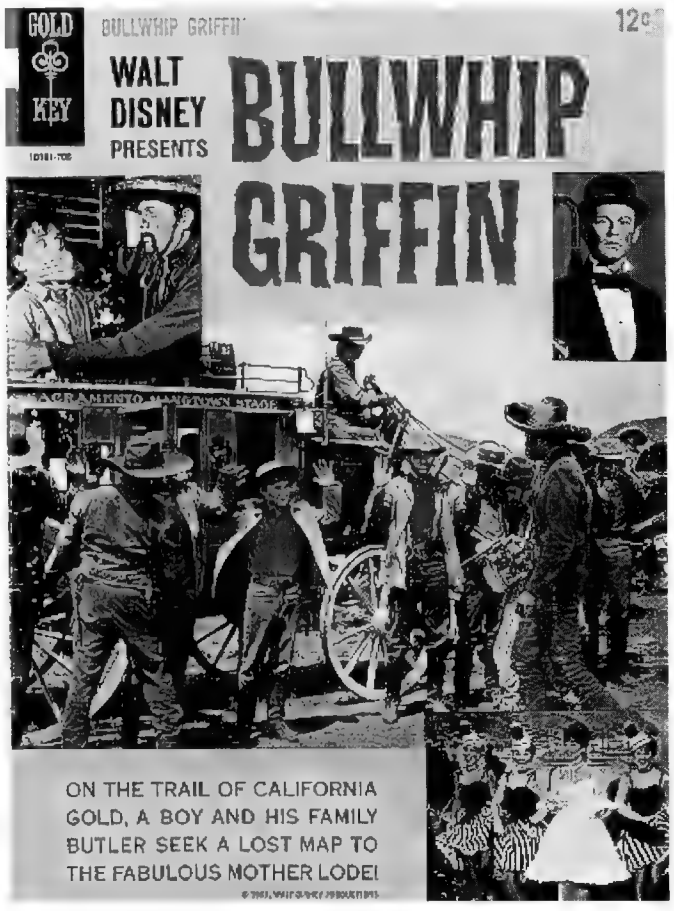
The first thing one wonders about this is, "Why does the art look so different?" Well, it could be because Gold Key combined Dan Spiegel and Russ Manning on the same issue. At times, it is not clear who pencilled and who inked; they might have even switched roles on alternate pages because there are some that look more Spiegel than Manning and vice versa. However, though individually both are great at what they do, the two are not an artistic match and Dan Spiegel's humorous style predominates. Score: 3.





Perhaps because these movies are not of particular fan interest, you can get a peek at these comics adaptations and this great Manning art at moderate prices, compared to more highly-sought books of the same period!

GOLD KEY
SUMMER MAGIC
NOW ONLY 12¢
WALT DISNEY'S
SUMMER MAGIC
When misfortune strikes, a big-city family begins an adventurous new life in a small town!
HAYLEY MILLS


GOLD KEY
BULLWHIP GRIFFIN
12¢
WALT DISNEY PRESENTS
BULLWHIP GRIFFIN
ON THE TRAIL OF CALIFORNIA GOLD, A BOY AND HIS FAMILY BUTLER SEEK A LOST MAP TO THE FABULOUS MOTHER LODE!

Covers to the 'Unknown Manning' comics featured in this article; note the painted **Ben-Hur** cover, typical when a photo was not used

Will Eisner

The Enduring Spirit of Comics

by Bill Baker

If anyone doubts the truthfulness of the above title, they need look no further than the official listing of the 2000 Harvey Award winners which were announced during a ceremony held Friday night, the 27th of April, 2001, at the Pittsburgh Comicon. The list of award recipients clearly shows that Will Eisner won two separate awards that evening for projects produced sixty years apart!

If that wasn't reason enough to celebrate this wonderful artist and his long-lived work, DC Comics' mammoth *The Spirit Archives* series is an unmitigated hit. The project, which will eventually collect and present all of Eisner's seminal strips featuring Denny Colt and his diverse cast of friends and foes in enduring hardcover editions for the first time, is reaching both the established fan base of serious collectors and new readers alike. Eisner is not only one of the most revered and popular creators of sequential stories, but even his most commercial work seems to be built for the long haul.

Retailers across the country are happily selling and reordering these thick volumes, all of which bear a hefty price tag, with wild abandon. Additionally, another DC project—*The Will Eisner Library*—is pumping out reprints of almost the entire library of the grand master's graphic novels and collections for an eager buying public.

Recently, Eisner took some time to discuss the continued success of the character he is most identified with, provide some thoughts on why he thinks stories created decades ago are still popular today, and why we probably won't be seeing any new stories featuring The Spirit coming from his studios any time soon. He also talks about his latest, as yet unpublished graphic novel, how he creates his tales, and what it takes for an idea to captivate him enough to spend a year of his life creating a tale on that subject.

Comic Book Marketplace: *What are your feelings about the incredible popularity of* The Spirit Archives*?*
Will Eisner: I'm amazed, I'm as amazed as you are!

CBM: *Well, truth be told, I'm not amazed but more gratified to see how many new and young readers the reprints are bringing in, along with the older fans. Is that a heartening thing for you?*
EISNER: It is. It's awesome! [Laughter] I tell you, there was a time when I thought *The Spirit* was dead. As a matter of fact, in all the years I've been in the syndicate newspaper business, I've seen very few comic strips either come back or survive beyond their last day. But *The Spirit* seems to have survived after a ten-year hiatus. It's incredible. I don't know how to account for it. I could postulate some theories but, frankly, I'd rather leave that to others. Anyhow, I'm overwhelmed.

It's reassuring to me, I must say, because the work I've always done was intended for endurance. I've always meant whatever I did to be able to withstand time ... to be around. So, maybe *The Spirit* has done that. At any rate, I'm very grateful.

ARTWORK © 2001 WILL EISNER

CBM: *What are some of the theories that you or those you've talked with about it have regarding the endurance of this character?*

EISNER: Well, I've had conversations with people, but I think, essentially, it was a very simple thing. *The Spirit*, originally, was addressed to a newspaper audience. The newspaper audience was an adult audience, and consequently I wrote stories that were not necessarily parallel to the kind of stories you found in comic books on the newsstands. Consequently, the stories had a little bit more depth to them, more reality. And, apparently, what's been happening is that the audience is now becoming a little more sophisticated, and those stories have relevance. The other theory is that it's very much like the Sherlock Holmes stories which have endured over the years, despite the fact that they were about a time long ago and far away. The essences of those stories are fundamental themes. The stories I always dealt with were basically fundamental stories. And I had another advantage, I think, adding to that theory, and that is that The Spirit was never really a superhero. Consequently, the stories that were built around him were built around more substantial things than the chase, or vengeance, or retrieval of something. It usually had to do with action between people, and that has great endurance because the interaction between people in 1940 [was] the same as it is today. So, anyway, that's my theory. But I'd like to leave it to someone like you to develop a theory on it. [General laughter]

CBM: *Well, to be honest, I think it endures because it's superior storytelling.*

EISNER: Well, maybe so. But the kinds of stories [do matter]. Look, there's fine storytelling in all kinds of areas, but somehow, some things [stand out]. Look at Mary Wollenstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein.* That survived over the years. You'd think it was essentially a science fiction story that might have been just a [passing] thing. I don't know, really, why things survive, except for the fact that they apparently touch something that people understand, and can live with, and find valid. I'm hoping that all of my [work falls in that category]. As a matter of fact I'm sitting here elated over a report from DC that, since they took over the printing of the *Will Eisner Library*, *A Contract with God* this year sold over 5,000 copies. That's 22 years after it was [first] published! So, I'm just kind of walking on air. I'm beginning to feel supernatural! [General laughter]

CBM: *You mentioned Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and his most famous creation, Sherlock Holmes, a bit earlier. With Doyle's love-hate relationship with that character in mind, I've just got to ask you the same question he grew to loathe: Are you ever going to return to the character and do another Spirit story, or are you just too busy with other things?*

EISNER: Well, you've heard me answer this [question]. Every once in a while I get the feeling that I

would like to do it, and [then] I lie down until the feeling goes away. [General laughter] No one should ever say [absolutely] "no" about anything. I won't ever say, "No, I will never do it." But I have no intention right now, actually, because I'm overwhelmed by the things I have yet to do. I've got stories lined up that I want to do that are more important. And really, to be honest with you, very bluntly, there's only two reasons I would do *The Spirit* again, I should do *The Spirit* again. One is to still prove I can run the mile in 4:10 flat. [General laughter] And the other reason might be for money, both of which are really not necessary to me at this point. So, I don't know. Maybe one day, I don't know. At this point, right now I'm in the middle of a book, and then I have another book that I want to do after that. And after that, I want to do another book. These are things that I feel are important for me to do. Things I've been wanting to do for years, and to do *The Spirit* would be, really, unimportant, in the larger scheme of things. Anyway, I think you understand what I mean.

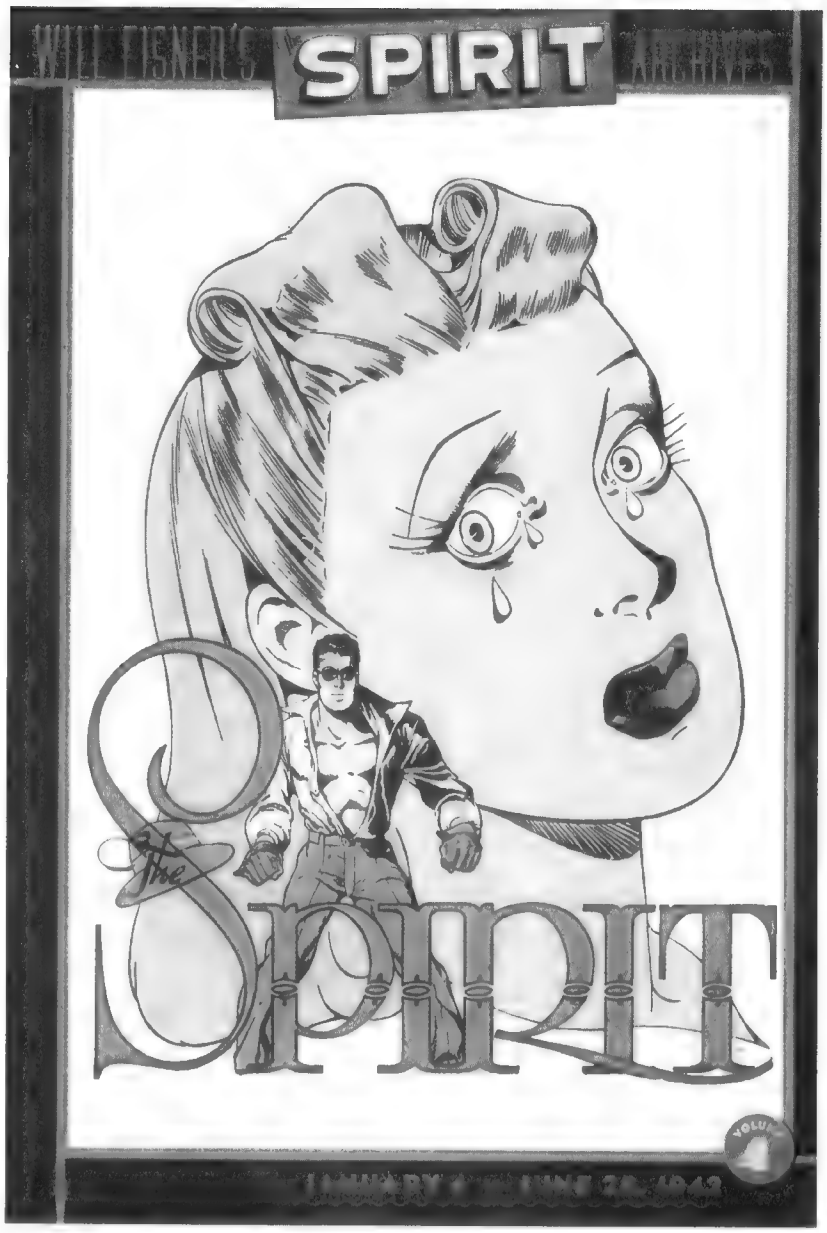
CBM: *Sort of "Been there, done that."*

EISNER: Well, yeah. [General laughter] I mean, what more do I have to prove? I love The Spirit. I look back on at the old Spirit stories that DC is reprinting and I cringe because some of the stuff is pretty poor. But the character is still a very [interesting one]. I still draw the character on covers and so forth. I do posters, and I'm still, apparently, identified with the character, with The Spirit itself. But, really, I'm a mountain climber. All my life I've been struggling up the side of the mountain to get to the brass ring, and I'm still doing that.

CBM: *How involved have you been with the* Archives *reprint project?*

EISNER: Well, very [involved] in the beginning. As a matter of fact, I'm still pretty much involved with the editor who's involved with doing it. In the beginning I stipulated, as a condition of the deal, that they would abide by two things. First; that they would keep the colors flat and as close to the way they were when I did it in the first place. And the second thing is that they would print it on paper that would look like the old [newsprint]. In other words, keep it looking as close to the way it was in 1940. I didn't want them to apply what I call computer coloring, and stuff of that sort. They agreed to do that, and they've followed through. They've been very, very faithful. It's been quite successful, so I'm very pleased. I'm more than pleased. I'm astonished, to tell you the truth! [General laughter]

CBM: *DC seems to have done an exceptional job with these editions.*



The Spirit's eternal flame, Ellen Dolan, was another unmatched element of Eisner's classic version of four-color adventure

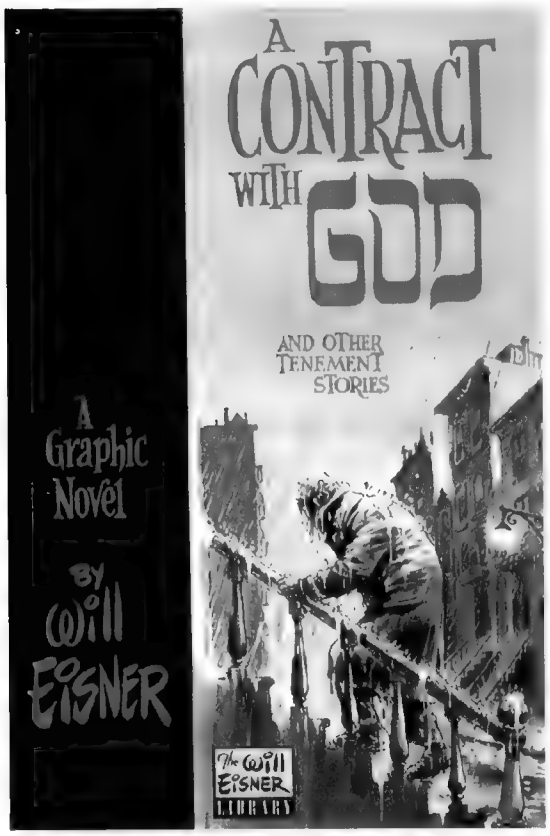
EISNER: Yes. The production is superb, and the people working on it are very thoughtful. They call me up, they show me proofs, they do all the things any creator would want from his publisher. They ask my opinion, they discuss with me before they have someone write a foreword, [and] ask for suggestions on who I would want to write a foreword. And, in one case, they asked me to look over one of the forewords and comment. Well, I contributed a few historical facts only. But the point is, they keep me very much informed, keep me very privy to the product.

CBM: *Do you think we might see, since the* Archives *are such a rousing success, a revival of* The Spirit-The New Adventures *series?*

EISNER: Well, we're talking now about the *New Adventures*, and I think we've had an offer from one of the other publishers. I believe it's Dark Horse. And we're going to publish an edition featuring all of the *New Adventures*

stories. Whether that will continue as a series, I don't know. It was rather expensive to produce and, these days, 32-page comic books are not doing well enough in the market place to support that kind of book. So I don't really know. That was a very funny situation. Denis Kitchen, for years, had been asking me the same question you started out with, "When are you going to do another Spirit story?" And I kept saying, "I don't want to do it." At the time I wanted to do *Dropsie Avenue*, and the next time he talked to me, I said I wanted to do the next book. One day he called me and said, "Will, suppose I got somebody to do it? Would you object to that?" And I said, "Well, the only thing I would agree to is if you got somebody who is really very top rate to do it. One of the very top men in the field," thinking to myself, "Now, who would want to do somebody else's comic strip?" [General laughter] Well, he called me up about a week later and said, "Alan Moore wants to write one," and I nearly fell out of my chair. I said, "I can't believe it!" And he says, "I gotcha!" [More general laughter] So I said, "All right, go ahead. You got me at my word."

Alan Moore, Neil Gaiman, Dave Gibbons... they all did a very fine job. The only condition that I made was that I would not be involved in the creation of the stories in any way. That they would have a totally free hand, and they must do it in their own style, [using] their own basic idea, and their own take on the character. All I would do was be sure that they didn't violate the character, itself. Like make the character a drug addict, or something of that sort. But beyond that, each man did their own take [on The Spirit]. [For instance] Neil Gaiman, and the artist involved, did their own thing. I didn't fool around at all with the way they drew the character. But what happened was something very good, and it turned out very well, and had a lot of support from the audience, and got a lot of applause. So, apparently, it worked.



From comic books and **Spirit** sections starting in the 30s and 40s, and on to graphic novels in the 70s and 80s

But *The Spirit* is a very hard thing for someone else to do, for it depends heavily on the Will Eisner style. It's like what happened with Milton Caniff, when Milton Caniff stopped doing *Terry and the Pirates*. They tried to continue it with a very competent artist, and it never worked. There are certain comic strips, certain characters, certain cartoons that are so identified with a creator, that it's very hard for somebody to come in and be that creator. Certain strips can do it. Batman and Superman can, because the character itself is so contrived, if you will. I don't mean it in a negative sense. I mean he's so artificial, really, that almost anybody can do it. But the other things, like the things I do, are very personal. And it's very hard to be me. I doubt whether anybody could...

In fact, I had trouble years ago. The Wally Wood incident was an example. I tried to get somebody to help me, and take over *The Spirit* while I was still doing it on a weekly basis. I had Jules Feiffer to write the story, and I asked Wally Wood to do a series. And he did it, but he did it in his own style, and I got a lot of flack from editors who complained that it was not what they bought in the first place. "It wasn't Will Eisner," they said.

CBM: *I can hear them complaining that it was just "that hack, Wally Wood."* [General laughter]

EISNER: Wally Wood was no hack. The guy was a bloody genius! As a matter of fact, in 1950 he was doing the interior of space ships that look like today's space ships. He was very under-appreciated.

CBM: *Well, this actually provides a nice segue into discussion of one of the new books you've got coming out,* Shop Talk.

EISNER: Yes. This is a collection of interviews that I had done about 10 or 12 years ago with professionals that I thought were very important, and who I felt were people I could hold kind of a professional conversation with. It was based on the idea that, in the old days of my own studio, as well as the studio at Eisner-Iger, we used to sit around at the end of the day and just chat, you know, just talk as we were cleaning up and getting ready to go home. And, usually, the conversations were really good, and I found them very rewarding—professionally rewarding—'cause you got an idea of what the other fellow was thinking, what his philosophy was, and so on.

And I was talkin' to Milton Caniff one day, and he agreed to do an interview on that basis, and he thought it was a great idea. And so I did the interview with him. It was so successful, I began doing the interviews with the other

guys. And I put together a group of people who I felt would respond to that kind of interview—it wasn't really an interview, it was a conversation between two professionals—which I felt would be very helpful for the young cartoonists. At that time I was beginning to teach, and I learned that my students were real eager to know, or to be privy to a conversation between two professionals. I knew that when I was a kid I would have loved to sit around and listen to Milton Caniff talking to another professional, and hear them exchange ideas.

Now, interviews would be a little different than the standard interview because, generally, an interview is conducted by a journalist, who's got a totally different perspective, and is really not intimate with the field. The professional then finds himself saying things, or answering questions from the journalist, that are sometimes defensive, sometimes evasive, [and] some of them are even artificial. Whereas, when two professionals are talking to each other, it's difficult to put on airs, if you will.

CBM: *Well, it sounds like it's akin to the difference between a job interview and sitting down to talk with a co-worker, in a sense.*

EISNER: Exactly. Exactly. I find it hard, if I'm talking to another professional, to make a claim about work he knows is not valid. So that kind of conversation is a little bit more open, it's not as carefully calculated as it would be if you were talking to a [journalist]. I'd say it'd be more like the fanzine interviews, which are very informative, but they're never really as helpful, in my opinion, to the young student as these would be. At any rate, I thought this was important. I felt these men were men that would live on in the history of this field. Unfortunately, a number of them are dead now. I guess that at least half of them I interviewed are dead and gone. But what they contributed to the field will live on, and I think that makes what they say important. At any rate, Dark Horse is publishing it, and they tell me that pre-publication interest is very high.

CBM: *I know I've already reserved room on my shelf for this book. Also, the first printings of these pieces are quite difficult to find, since they were printed in your magazines, originally.*

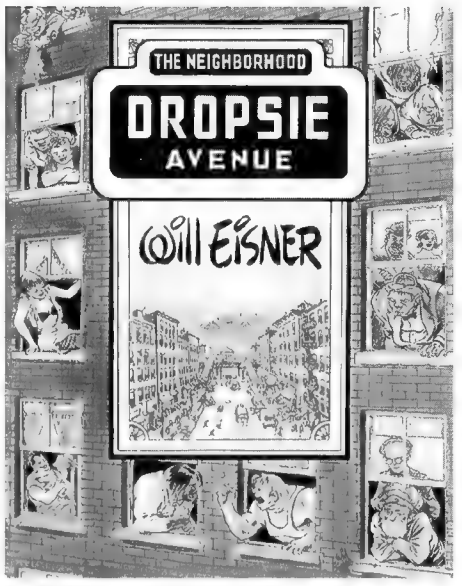
EISNER: They were published in the *Will Eisner Quarterly*, and later in the Kitchen Sink *Spirit* magazine on an irregular schedule.

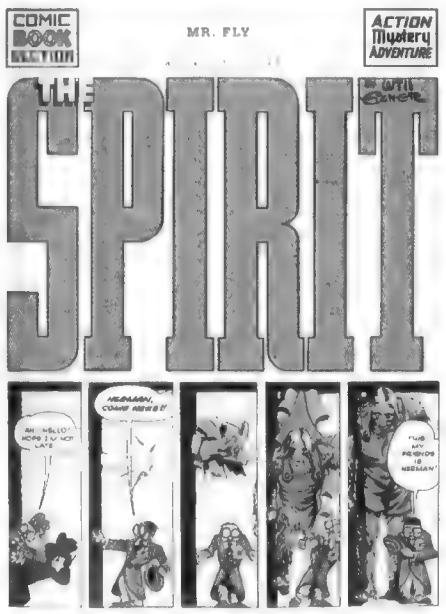
CBM: *Now, I've heard a rumor that you plan on continuing these conversations, with a whole new crop of creators, in the near future.*

EISNER: Yes, the rumor's true. I've been planning to do a series of one-on-one [conversations], as a matter of fact, that'll be the title, probably. There, I'll be talking at great length with one person. It'll be a book-length conversation with another professional. I've got a couple of people who have already said yes. And I think that Dark Horse wants to publish it, too. So, that's to be the next follow-up on that and, hopefully, that'll be a long, ongoing series.

CBM: *Would you care to do a little name-dropping here?*

EISNER: Well, the first guy I talked to who said "Yes" was Frank Miller. He and I have had conversations together, many, many, many times in all sorts of places, including bar rooms, and we found that we couldn't stop talking. [Laughter] We talked, and talked, and talked, so I think this will be really good.





Whether in the 40s (below) or the 70s (above) Eisner can play with the conventions of comic strip graphics until they are either dominant or invisible

CBM: *Well, you're not one to sit on your laurels. You alluded to being like a mountain climber, earlier. Maybe you're more of a long distance runner...*

EISNER: Well, I guess you might call me that. But sitting on laurels is a very slippery seat. There's so much to be done. I've never felt that I've actually got there. I'm constantly in pursuit of a new idea, or what I call excellence. My own artwork, I'm constantly polishing my work, and trying to improve my reach, and so forth. I don't think I'm different than most guys in the field. I don't know of anybody who's been worthwhile in this field who's ever sat down and said, "Well, I've done it! Now I can sit down, and

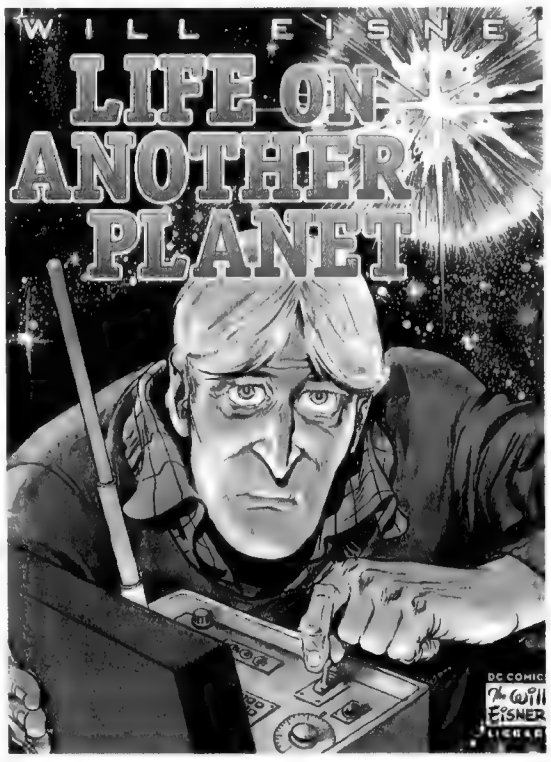
pat my belly and relax." Everybody, that I know of, has always been in pursuit of this excellence, as we call it. And remember I came up at a time when the medium was regarded with great disdain. Today, it's finally achieving some respectability, a little bit more respectability than it had when I started. So I was out to prove that this medium was capable of things far more [important] than we attributed to it. In fact, early on, in 1939, back at the Will Eisner studios, even at the Eisner-Iger [shop], I decided that this was going to be my life's work. Most of the other guys wanted to go on to be illustrators. To them, comics was a place where they could make enough money to go on and do serious painting, or serious work. Some of them wanted to go on into what they called "fine arts." But, no, I knew I was going to devote my life to this, and I have.

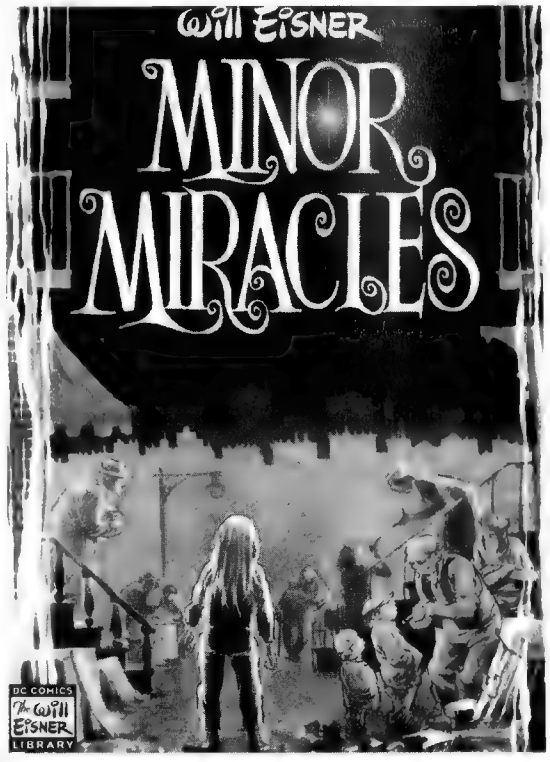
CBM: *Was there a particular moment where that resolution hit you, when you realized the medium's potential, and that it was, indeed, literature?*

EISNER: It wasn't a single moment, but it came very rapidly when I first started working in the medium, back in 1937-38. I just had started Eisner-Iger back in 1937, [when] I was just eighteen, nineteen years old, just out of high school. It became very clear to me that this was really a literary art form. And the more I thought about it, the more I realized that this [medium] was capable of doing far more than everybody thought it could do. Remember, it was a wide-open field at the time. Everything was new. We could do all kinds of things, and you could count on being first. It wasn't very hard to be innovative in those days, because there was nothing [stopping you, and there was] no competition, particularly. [General laughter] But it became very clear to me that this was a true literary art form. I could see it. Now, you have to add to that fact that, inside me, there was a frustrated or unsatisfied writer, and an unsatisfied painter. I always wanted to write and, as a matter of fact, I enjoy the writing part of this medium as much as I do the artwork. So it gradually, out of my own psyche, or need to satisfy my own internal ego, it became very clear to me that this was indeed possible. And the more I worked at it, the more possible it seemed, and after a while it became an obsession, and became a lifetime goal.

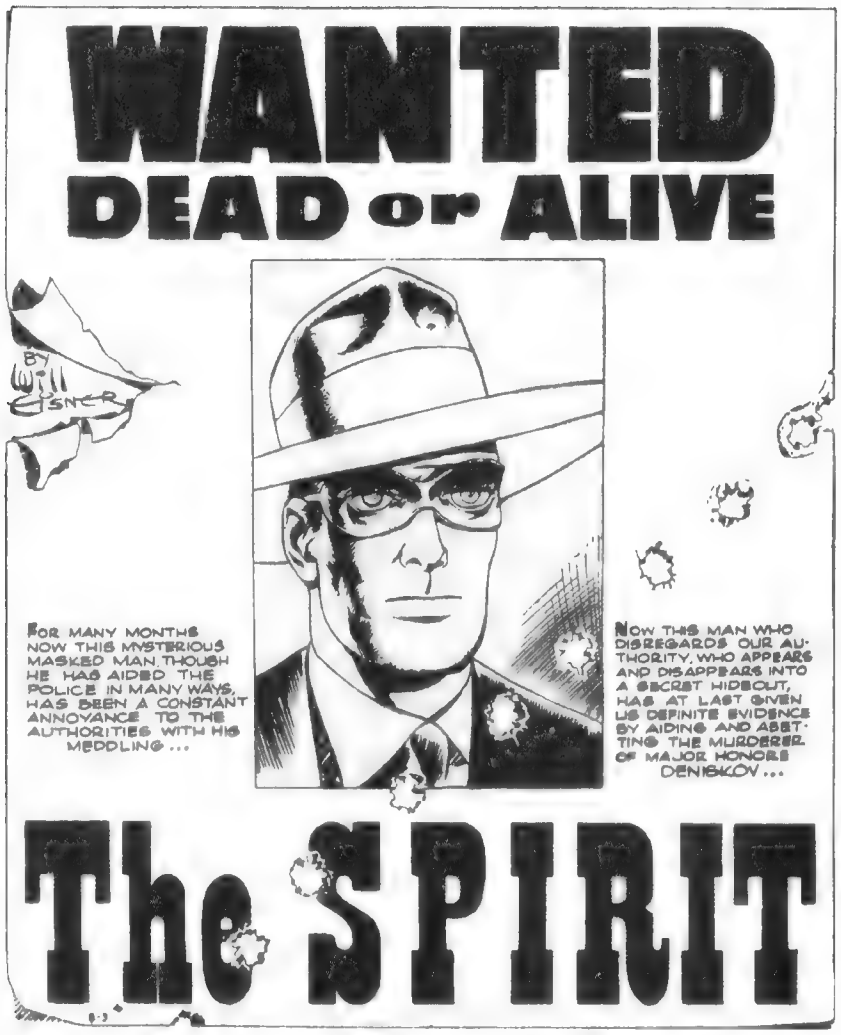
CBM: *Well, what's your typical workday like, and how has it changed over the years?*

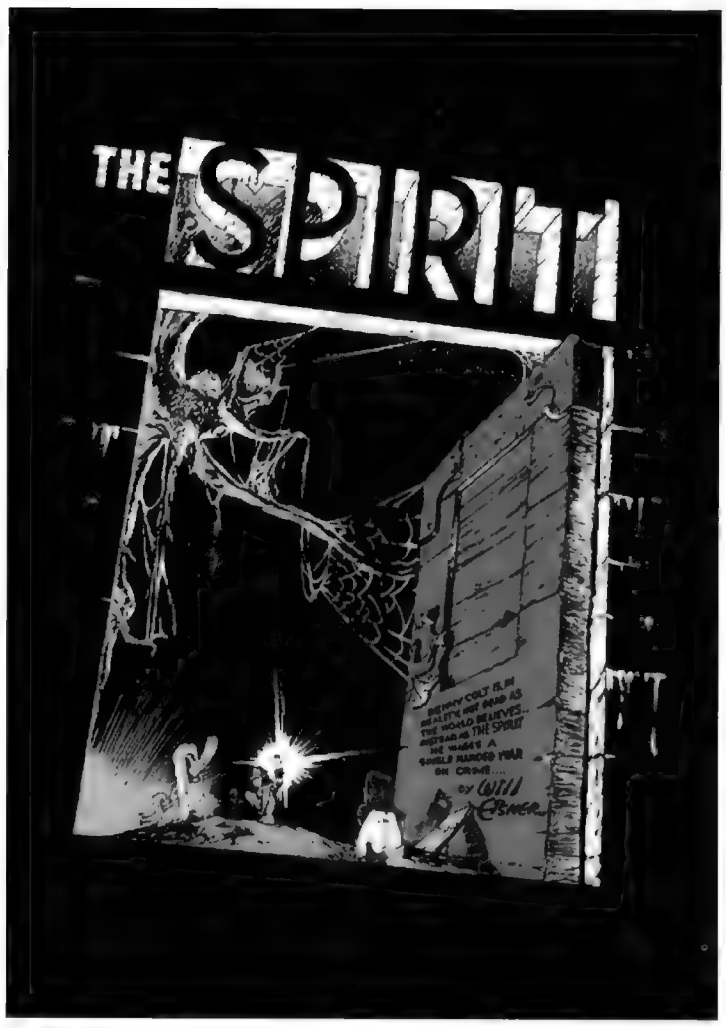
EISNER: Well, of course in the days of *The Spirit*, I worked long, long hours because I was putting out a complete story every week, and I was under a continuing deadline. Then, ultimately, I began to expand and operate a publishing company. So, I was running a business for a while, I was being a businessman, all in the field, but, certainly, running a newspaper syndicate for a short time, and then another publishing company. In 1974-75, I sold my company and sat down to write a graphic novel, what I thought would be the first of its kind, and that changed my lifestyle. I eliminated the large staff that I had; I was working alone [for the first time]. And, to this day, today, I work from 8:30 in the morning 'til 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Usually eat lunch at my desk, unless I have a visitor. I do my own lettering, and my own backgrounds. I don't have any staff assistant. I enjoy working at it. I create my own deadlines. I produce approximately at the rate of about a page a day.





Major themes to minor miracles, and always from the human perspective, Eisner 's **Spirit** stories were never bound by the strictures of the adventure story and his subsequent work has gone further afield


WANTED
DEAD or ALIVE
BY Will EISNER
FOR MANY MONTHS NOW THIS MYSTERIOUS MASKED MAN, THOUGH HE HAS AIDED THE POLICE IN MANY WAYS, HAS BEEN A CONSTANT ANNOYANCE TO THE AUTHORITIES WITH HIS MEDDLING ...
NOW THIS MAN WHO DISREGARDS OUR AUTHORITY, WHO APPEARS AND DISAPPEARS INTO A SECRET HIDEOUT, HAS AT LAST GIVEN US DEFINITE EVIDENCE BY AIDING AND ABETTING THE MURDERER OF MAJOR HONORE DENISKOV ...
The SPIRIT



That is a page of penciling, inking, and maybe the lettering, in a day. The writing I do, first I do it in complete dummy form, and then I copy it onto a reproducible page, and I ink it. So my work is pretty routine, actually. I'm a very disciplined worker. I work in a very disciplined fashion.

CBM: *Do you take the weekends off?*

EISNER: Oh, yeah. I play tennis a couple times a week. And I do a lot of traveling, too, during the year. I do at least three conventions a year, at least. I travel to Europe, and here and there, so I get around.

CBM: *Regarding the creation of the graphic novel... When we've talked in the past about how you created scripts for* The Spirit *strips, you said that you started from the ending and worked forward.*

EISNER: I still do. A graphic novel is usually a story that's been gestating in my head for a period of time, and it requires some research. Take *Dropsie Avenue*, which was a heavily researched book. I had to go back and track the history of the Bronx, actually, the whole history of the Bronx. I had to do some reading on that. But I knew how the story was going to end, 'cause I started out with the ending, in my mind. For me, once I have an ending, then I'm actually working on a path going to that ending. I'm working on all the elements that lead to that ending. And [my typical] graphic novel is done pretty much that way. I start out with a basic social theme, with a problem and its ending, and I will develop it into a story. But I do not start with an idea, a gimmick, and then build a story around it and wait to see how it comes out. Everybody works differently. Some guys do that, and do it very successfully. I don't. I know how it's going to end, before I even start. So everything I do leads up to that ending.

Eisner can either thrust his message out of the picture plane to you, or draw you down deep below it

CBM: *What does it take for an idea, theme or that final image, what does it take for that idea or image to grab you enough to make you want to commit all the time you have to put into completing that graphic novel?*

EISNER: That's a very, very good and fair question, 'cause in reality a book that runs over a 150, a 160 pages takes me almost a year to do. Because, even at a page a day, it's a 150 days [just drawing], and then you've got the rest of the other [work involved with creating a book], so you've got to feel that the subject of the book is important enough to deserve that investment. It has to be a story, or [make] a point, that I want to tell. *A Life Force* was a book in which I wanted to explore man's reason for living. *A Contract with*

God was a book [which centers on] man's relationship with God. These are themes that I think are terribly important, and worth discussing. So I won't do a book that's [without] a redeeming social value. I won't do it for pure entertainment.

Well, occasionally I will do something that's [not as deep]. A couple years ago I took some time out and did a couple adaptations of classics. *The Princess and the Frog*, *Moby Dick* and *Don Quixote*, which I called "The Last Knight." For a long time I've been wanting to do adaptations of the great classics, and say something with it. In the case of *The Last Knight*, what I was saying there, I was making a philosophical point, that people are, most of us are, really Don Quixotes. We have a dream, and we fancy ourselves usually [as something we aren't]; we are what we think we want to be. And so I built this [version of] *Don Quixote*, and I altered it to some degree, I adapted it.

Actually, these were the result, also, of a series of television shows I had developed for Public Television, when they were interested in dealing with the literacy problem. And I fashioned a series of half hour adaptations of great classics which was designed to provide a reading experience on television. Balloons would pop in [during each episode]. Anyway, a lot of money was spent to on developing a pilot, then they were never able to raise enough money to continue it. So it left me with about six or seven different stories all broken down and worked out, so I decided to do them in print. So, that's how that [series of books from NBM] came about.

CBM: *But, even given those circumstances, it was a fairly serious objective you were trying to achieve.*

EISNER: Yeah, I was. I was. Yeah. So, this fall NBM is going to publish *Moby Dick*, which I call "The White Whale." It is an adaptation of the great book [by Herman Melville]. And there I did the same thing. I reduce it into a 32-page work, but I did it from the whale's point of view. [General laughter] I try to make the whale a kind of hero in the thing.

CBM: *I know you don't like to talk too far ahead, do you want to talk a little bit about your next book, the one you're working on right now?*

EISNER: Well, I generally don't like to discuss them too deeply because, while I'm working on them, talking about 'em kind of dilutes it in my mind. This book I'm working on now will be published by DC. As I said, I did it in complete pencil dummy form first [and] they read it, and bought it.

It'll have to do with the social dynamics of marriage. The idea came to me from reading a lot of great legends. When I was doing research on *Princess and the Frog*, and going through Grimm's fairy tales, I discovered something very interesting. That throughout all of folk literature, including Jewish folk literature or middle European folk literature, the name of the game of social advancement was getting married, that was the only way one could lift oneself out of poverty.

Classically, for example, the king's daughter was awarded to some poor peasant who did some great feat. And it was marrying the king's daughter, or marrying the prince, which lifted the family out of poverty and brought them to a whole new world. The more I researched it, the more it becomes clear to me that this is something, really, we're all still very involved in socially, but today we accept [it] without much thought. The fact that when somebody marries, say a poor family marries into a very wealthy family, they are automatically lifted out of their social class and, in the process, they develop status in their own community. Anyway, that's the reasoning behind this book.

All these books are developed out of either a sense of rage, or some social observation. I'm not a moralist. Most of my books should be regarded as reportage. I'm an observer. My idea is to come along side you, and nudge you, and say, "Hey, did you notice? Have you seen this?" Or point to the man lying in the middle of the sidewalk, where everybody's walking by and not paying attention, and say, "Hey, did you notice the fact that nobody stopped to help this guy?"

In the case of *Invisible People*, it was triggered by a article reported in a local Florida newspaper about a woman

named Carolyn Lamboly. She committed suicide after many attempts to get help from the Welfare Department, she was sick, and without any source of income. She'd lost her job, and her papers got all mixed up, and, finally, despairing of any help, she killed herself. Two weeks later, the Welfare check arrived. I was enraged when I read it. I began to think about it, and I realized that a lot of people become invisible in our society. So I wrote a book, *Invisible People*.

CBM: *That's a devastating story.*

EISNER: It is. I recited it at the end of the book, because I felt that I had to give a good, sound reason for such an angry book. Actually, it consisted of three stories. One story was about a man who opened the newspaper one morning and, looking at the obituaries, saw his name there. He called up the newspaper, said, "Hey, I'm not dead!" Ultimately, he does die, though.

CBM: *Well, this is kind of an unfair question, because it's like asking which of your children is your favorite but I've always wanted to ask you which of your graphic novels is the one that's your favorite, or which one is closest to your heart, and why?*

EISNER: I guess *A Contract with God* still remains my favorite. It's like a first child. It was a first attempt, and the fact that it has been in print all these years is very reassuring. I guess I was right. [Laughter] It was a very risky thing to do because at the time, for the first time in my career, I had no publisher. I couldn't explain the book to anybody, because it was such a departure from the usual comic book material that there was no point in even telling it to anybody. So I sat down and spent close to a year to produce the book with no publisher. I couldn't sell it. I tried three or four publishers until I found a small publisher who was willing to publish it. He ultimately went out of business. [General laughter] As far as *The Spirit* is concerned, I have an all-time favorite—it's the story of Gerhard Shnobble. And that was my first attempt on *The Spirit* to do something philosophical. And it was very well received. I got a lot of good response on that.

CBM: *It's the one that most people familiar with the series thinks of first.*

EISNER: Really?

CBM: *It's a very common response.*

EISNER: Well, I'm glad to hear that, 'cause it is so reinforcing. [Laughter] Anyway, it is a favorite. As a matter of fact, it remains so vividly with me, that five or six years ago—I guess it was, maybe longer—the city of Copenhagen in Denmark invited me, along with four other artists, to decorate five of their buildings. Each artist had a building. And I did a big mural that appears on the side of a building with Gerhard Shnobble flying.

CBM: *I'd like to close with one of my favorite questions. Is there a single question that you can think of, but you've never been asked, that you've always wanted to give an answer to?*

EISNER: That's an interesting one! [Laughter] You're very imaginative. I don't know. People have asked me almost everything that I could think of if I were an interviewer. I'm stumbling around, rattling my mind, here. I can't think of a single question. How about when would I have preferred to be born? Or, what about the future? I would have liked to have been born 25 years later. Because the field is growing in the direction I wanted to see it grow. Where do I think the industry is going? I think the field is maturing. I don't think comics will disappear, or what we know as comics. I think of myself as a writer. I write with pictures. That's one hell of a good question! [General laughter]

CBM: *Thank you.*

EISNER: I'll call you around three o'clock in the morning, when I think about the answer.

CBM: *Right, it'll be one of those instances where you'll wake up in the middle of the night...*

EISNER: "Now I got it! I'll call him." [More general laughter]

CBM: *Well, if that happens, please feel free to call me. Anytime.*

Bill Baker is a freelance journalist and a regular columnist for *Comic Book Marketplace*. His column, "Inspiration Central," appears monthly.

WILL EISNER

AIN'T WON

by Jon

Action Comics #7 (Dec 1938) featured the second Superman cover and the first of the hero "airborne;" in the title logo a historic stamping marks this copy as filed with the New York District Court on March 16, 1939, and a stamp below that marks it as "Exhibit 18"

I have been reading and collecting comics for many a year. I have become entranced not only by comics as a form of entertainment, but have become a fan of the history of the development of the art form and the characters that populate the art form. Forays into original art have made me able to reach out across the years and "touch" an object created by pioneers of this craft that is a piece of that history and development of comic books.

My interests are diverse but I have always had an affinity for the late 1930s. Some time ago, I began the pursuit of a piece of Golden Age art from that period that fit many of my collecting criteria, art by Will Eisner from 1939. I had inquired of an individual if he had any Golden Age art. He said he had a "Wonderman" page from *Wonder Comics* #1. This intrigued me and got my acquisition juices going.

"In the beginning" there was Superman. Taking the world by storm in *Action* #1, cover dated June 1938, the potentially lucrative nature of this type of character did not go unnoticed by Victor Fox. Fox had been an accountant for National and decided that there was money to be made with a "superhero." Leaving Detective Comics and setting up his own company, he requested that the Eisner-

COVER © DC COMICS

IT A...
DER?

Berk

Iger shop create for him a "superman." The result was "Wonderman," who appeared in *Wonder Comics* #1, cover dated May 1939. Here was another guy running around in a brightly-colored costume with incredible strength and able to jump over many a tall building with a single bound. Problem is that this was 1939, and no one else but Superman had this particular schtick. Accordingly, Detective Comics moved quickly. Cover dated May 1939 means that the book appeared in March 1939. DC obtained a preliminary injunction (a legal procedure to order a stop to an act in order to prevent "irreparable harm") March 16, followed by a permanent injunction hearing on April 6 which quashed there ever being a second appearance of Wonderman. As produced, *Wonder Comics #2* contained, not Wonderman, but "Yarko the Great."

Wow! It would be real neat to own a page of this historic book. Since I owned a copy of the book, I asked the owner to identify the page by the caption. He did, and I could not find it. Strange. So I asked him to reaffirm, which he did. A bit suspicious, I asked if he would mind sending a photocopy of the page. He did. The page (clearly marked page 3) was nowhere to be

Wonder Comics #1 (May 1939) contained the first and only published appearance of Superman's first real rival; DC won a lawsuit against Fox that truncated the career of Wonderman, the "super-clone" created by Will Eisner at Fox's request

COVER © FOX FEATURES

MEANWHILE, FAR FROM THIS SCENE OF STRIFE AND HORROR, IN THE OFFICES OF THE INTERNATION BROADCASTING CO.

WORKING ALONE IN A RADIO CONTROL ROOM IS FRED CARSON, A YOUNG INVENTOR, IN REALITY **THE WONDER MAN**.....

'LO, CARSON- STILL FOOLIN' AROUND WITH THAT GOOFY TELEVISION APPARATUS OF YOURS?

ALWAYS HECKLING, EH? I'VE GOT PITTSTOWN ON THE TELEVISOR BEAM, SO DON'T BOTHER ME, REGGIE!

LOOK, CARSON! A STRIKE RIOT!

THE MUSCLES OF CARSON'S FACE TENSE, AS HIS TEETH CLENCH IN FURY AT THE FOUL ACTS OF THE "SLUGGERS....

WHERE YA GOIN', CARSON?

TO SEE HASTINGS!

ER--MR. HASTINGS, I- OH YOU'RE BUSY, I'LL COME BACK LATER

NONSENSE, CARSON! DON'T BE SO TIMID--- COME RIGHT IN--YOU KNOW MY DAUGHTER- BRENDA

HELLO, MR. CARSON-- I NEVER DID SEE YOU AFTER THE AIR RAID IN MOROVANIA!

SHE'S STILL TALKING ABOUT THE WONDER MAN

LOOK HERE, SIR- THERE'S A BIG BATTLE OUT AT PITTSTOWN- I'D LIKE TO COVER IT

A FIGHT? I WANT TO GO TOO, DADDY!

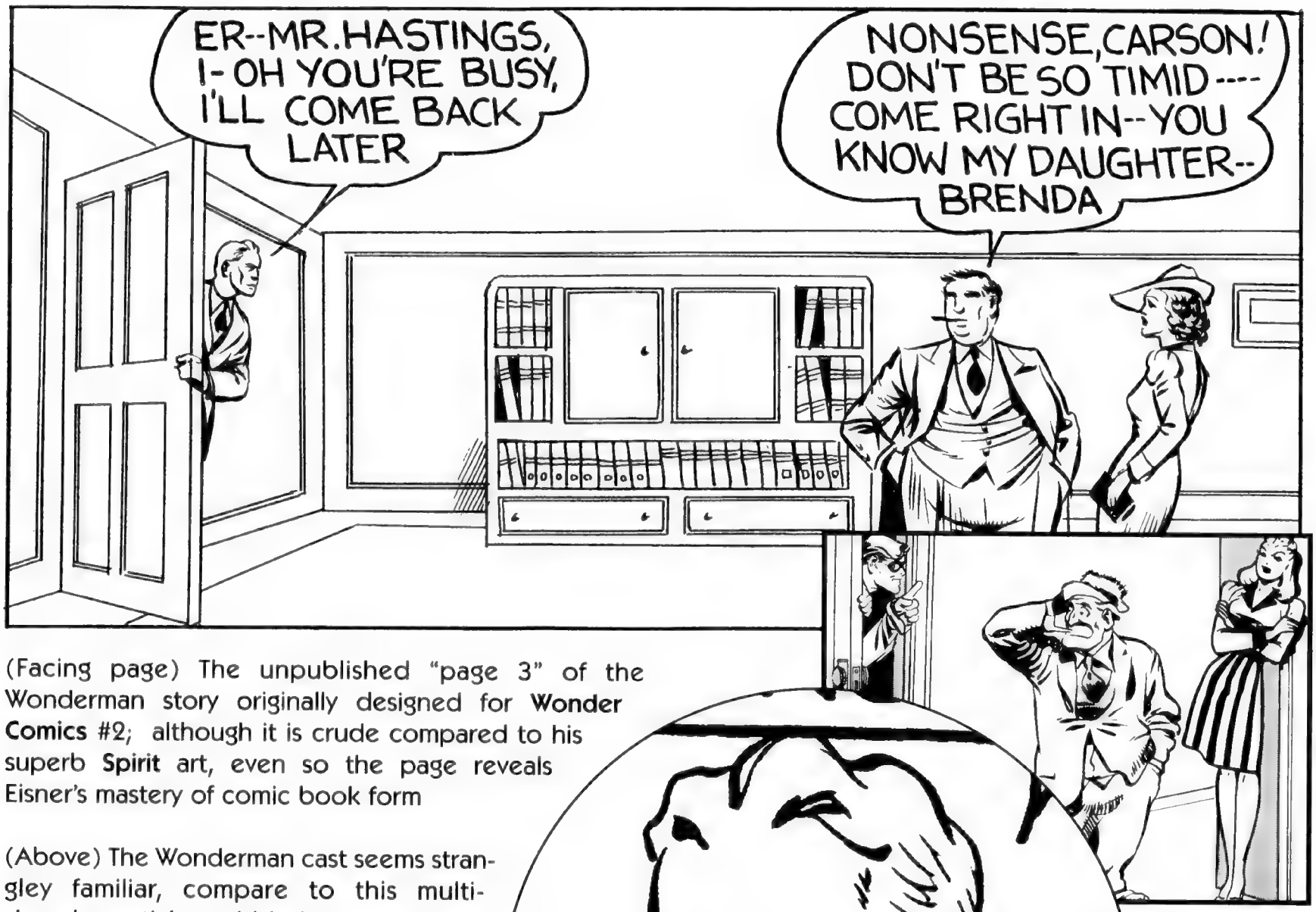
OH, ALL RIGHT- ANYTHING TO GET YOU OFF MY HANDS FOR A WHILE!

NOW JUST A MINUTE! I CAN'T TAKE HER WITH ME- IT'S TOO DANGEROUS-

3.

found in the comic. Then it hit me. Could it be? Comic books on a monthly schedule would have to have the contents of the next issue in progress. Could it be that this page was intended for the second appearance of Wonderman, which never saw the light of day? The context of the page clearly refers to past adventures of Wonderman and the interaction of Brenda with him. The owner never realized or thought about it. Without being a comic book collector or historian, he never gave it another thought. But I did.

I sent a copy of the art to Will Eisner. Not surprisingly, Eisner had no specific recollection of the page. (In fact all interviews with Eisner demonstrate that this whole episode was distasteful to him. He refused to lie for Fox and, accordingly, his shop and Fox parted ways.) He did, however, identify the art as his own. Comparing it to the art in the first issue, there is no question that the same artist did the art. Normally, "unpublished" art has less "value" than that which is published. But viewing art as "history," what makes this unpublished piece of art historic is the fact (and why) it is unpublished. So another small piece of comic history—over sixty years later—now stands revealed!


ER--MR.HASTINGS, I- OH YOU'RE BUSY, I'LL COME BACK LATER
NONSENSE,CARSON! DON'T BE SO TIMID ---- COME RIGHT IN--YOU KNOW MY DAUGHTER-- BRENDA

(Facing page) The unpublished "page 3" of the Wonderman story originally designed for **Wonder Comics** #2; although it is crude compared to his superb **Spirit** art, even so the page reveals Eisner's mastery of comic book form

(Above) The Wonderman cast seems strangley familiar, compare to this multi-decade pastiche cobbled together from **Spirit** stories of The Spirit, Commissioner Dolan and Ellen Dolan

(Inset) None of the much-reduced images of the Wonderman #2 strip do justice to the brushwork evident in the original, this head of Fred Carson gives some indication

Inspiration Central

Subject: MARTY NODELL A GOLDEN AGE BEACON

by Bill Baker

Editor's Note: Each issue we take a look at what inspired some of the greatest creators in comics to pursue their particular four color careers. We'll be talking with Golden Age and Silver Age legends, and we'll also chat with today's creators, who were motivated by some of those same legends. Next month we'll talk to Hellboy creator and Disney's Atlantis *artist* ***Mike Mignola*** *about his influences, but this month we turn our attention to* ***Marty Nodell****.*

Marty Nodell is one of those rarities in the world of comics, because he's literally transcended the genre in several ways. First, as the man behind the invention of the Golden Age Green Lantern, he's responsible for creating a comic book icon. For many, this distinction would be enough, and their place in the history of pop culture would be secured. But Marty's influence extends beyond even that landmark to encompass the creation of yet another widely recognized icon; he's the man who created Poppin' Fresh, the Pillsbury Dough Boy, surely one of the icons of the modern advertising age. And though this juxtaposition might seem a tad strange at first glance, once you have the pleasure of getting to know this masterful illustrator even a little, you begin to see that, no matter what he's doing, Marty applies himself with the same amount of dignified energy, homespun wisdom and sly humor that imbues all of his work.

Comic Book Marketplace: *So who were your inspirations?*

Marty Nodell: My biggest inspiration was George Washington.

CBM: *George Washington, the father of our country? In what way?*

NODELL: Well, it's his picture that appears on the dollar bill! [General laughter]

CBM: *Well, I can understand how that particular gentleman would provide a great deal of inspiration to you, but were there any people who you knew, who you might have encountered while learning to draw or growing up, who influenced your approach to creating stories?*

NODELL: Everyone has asked me who has influenced me, and who had more or less advised me, and so on. Well, in my particular case, it was my uncle, Dave Apollon, for one. He was the greatest mandolin player in the world, and was in vaudeville. He was [a regular performer] there for many years. And he was one I sort of followed as he worked. [I paid particular attention to] what he did, watching his work from the front of the audience, and how he worked.

(above) The major Golden Age hero, Green Lantern; (facing page) Nodell was also the artist behind the arty Poppin' Fresh

Other than that, going way back, I'd say Charlie Chaplin. He was perhaps the person who interested me the most, and I'd try following along, [trying to figure out] how I thought he worked. Which was always very good, as far as I was concerned. And it was not related to art, actually, but it was his timing, and arranging of scenes, and working from one scene to another [that really struck me].

And, also, a couple of my teachers in Chicago. The Chicago Academy of Fine Arts is where I had gone to [art] school, for the most part. One fellow who was really great [as a teacher] was a caricaturist, Roy C. Nelson. He was really very good, and he influenced me a great deal. And then, believe it or not, although he was an editorial cartoonist, Vaughan Schoemaker [influenced me, as well. He was a Pulitzer Prize winner, and] a very fine editorial cartoonist.

Aside from that, just a matter of going along, and following George Washington, and the dollar bill. That was about it.

CBM: *Regarding your uncle, you said you learned a lot from the front of the house, watching him work from the audience. What lessons did he offer you from that perspective?*

NODELL: Well, first of all, I spent a lot of time with him backstage, and got to know how he reacted to various things. Being a young kid, learning about how he does things, how he would do it, and so on. And learning about timing, too. About how he would go on the stage, and how he would react, and what he would do [to work the audience]. And there were other people there with him, at various shows, too.

CBM: *So, in the modern parlance, it was almost a cinematic kind of experience of the vaudeville show, then?*

NODELL: You might say that. That's right, because motion pictures followed. But learning from these people was a matter of drinking it in.

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The Jack Adler ~~Correction~~ Collection

by duanedimock.com

At this moment, you are holding a finished literary work (the entire mag, not just my article!), a finished array of carefully sized, placed and replaced texts and images, and a product that has gone through multiple complicated processes which are disguised to appear as organized and simple, so you can relax and read.

Every profession comes down to details: creating, analyzing, organizing and managing them. Every finished comic and magazine has these attributes or curses (depending what side you look from). This is a detailed examination of comics material that should have been trashed years ago.

Jack Adler: colorist, inker, editor, photographer, packager, stripper (colors, not clothes), developer of the DC 3-D comic technique, manager, inventor and collector. He seems to have gone through every possible position during his 30-year stay at DC comics. His 30-cent range (10 cent cover to 40 cent cover) spanned the years of 1901 to 1981.

Jack insured quality; as you have probably noticed through the years of collecting, the difference in print quality between Marvel and DC during the 60s and 70s is dramatic. Marvel used cheaper paper, which is yellowing at a noticeably higher rate due to oxidation—burning due to light and air exposure. Stack up a pile of Marvels and DCs next to each other (same condition) and you will be able to instantly pick the Marvel pile, without looking at the covers or spines.

Adler's color cover proofs are the finest examples of those covers that exist, as they were printed on even higher quality paper than their published counterparts. The definition of quality control was established and maintained at DC comics and Jack was at the helm, always throwing poor ones back until they measured up to his standards.

For reasons we may never know, Mr. Adler saved over 2000 examples of his DC comics work published from 1967 to 1974. These should-have-been-tossed-out pieces include original hand colored covers (unique paintings), hand colored pages, corrected and uncorrected color cover proofs (approval covers), silver proofs, mylar color keys, chromolins, match prints, match proofs and 4-color progressive proofs to 4-color separations.

Because he kept many examples, we now have a treasure trove of material. When determining a level of scarcity, for items dating from this era, original line art is common compared to the existence of these pieces.

Comprised of more than 100 titles, almost every comic DC published during 1967-1974 is represented. If Mr. Adler had saved every cover, color proof and separation he had worked on during only this period, we would be talking about 840,000 pieces (10,000 items/month times 84 months). To reiterate the rarity of the material surviving, 2000 items out of 840,000 is .0024%, that is like unseen traces of gases in the air. Again comparing original line art of about 1,200 pieces a month (30 titles a month) for 84 months is 100,000 pages, of which mass quantities exist. (One good reason everything isn't saved for collectors: Nothing would be worth anything if everyone could get one.)

A sampling of artists represented throughout includes Neal Adams, Murphy Anderson, Curt Swan, Basil Wolverton, Jake Kirby, Alex Toth, Joe Kubert, Carmine Infantino, Gil Kane, Steve Ditko, Berni Wrightson, Mike Kaluta, Marshall Rogers and every artist he "forgot to list" working for DC at that time.

The diversity of titles kept is amazing! The list includes everything from *Action* and *Adventures of Bob Hope* through *Metamorpho* and *Metal Men* to *Swamp Thing* and *Sugar and Spike*.

Any time you are able to observe a collection of anything, the sheer volume exposes relationships, facts and connections. Jack's favorite artist was Joe Kubert and his army comics and the collection bears this out, at the expense of other artists' representation. Still, this is an incredible windfall of material for researchers.

Following are a few examples, explaining the production process, and a special surprise for *CBM* readers: a comic book cover never before published!

ATRWORK © DC COMICS

Figure 1 [CHART PREPARED BY THE AUTHOR]

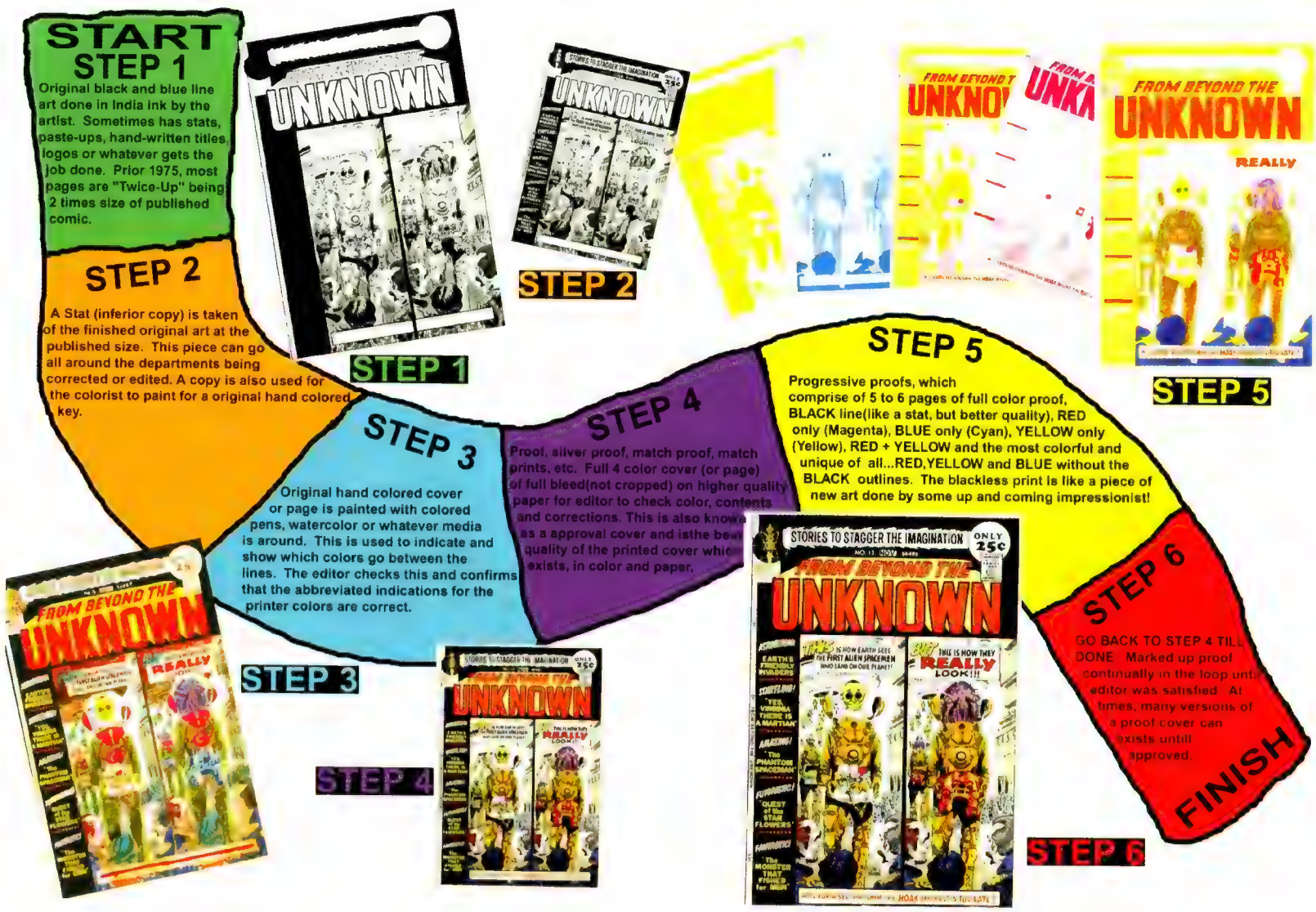

START
STEP 1
Original black and blue line art done in India ink by the artist. Sometimes has stats, paste-ups, hand-written titles, logos or whatever gets the job done. Prior 1975, most pages are "Twice-Up" being 2 times size of published comic.
STEP 2
A Stat (inferior copy) is taken of the finished original art at the published size. This piece can go all around the departments being corrected or edited. A copy is also used for the colorist to paint for a original hand colored key.
STEP 3
Original hand colored cover or page is painted with colored pens, watercolor or whatever media is around. This is used to indicate and show which colors go between the lines. The editor checks this and confirms that the abbreviated indications for the printer colors are correct.
STEP 4
Proof, silver proof, match proof, match prints, etc. Full 4 color cover (or page) of full bleed(not cropped) on higher quality paper for editor to check color, contents and corrections. This is also know as a approval cover and isthe be quality of the printed cover whi exists, in color and paper.
STEP 5
Progressive proofs, which comprise of 5 to 6 pages of full color proof, BLACK line(like a stat, but better quality), RED only (Magenta), BLUE only (Cyan), YELLOW only (Yellow), RED + YELLOW and the most colorful and unique of all...RED,YELLOW and BLUE without the BLACK outlines. The blackless print is like a piece of new art done by some up and coming impressionist!
STEP 6
GO BACK TO STEP 4 TILL DONE Marked up proof continually in the loop until editor was satisfied At times, many versions of a proof cover can exists untill approved.
FINISH
UNKNOWN
FROM BEYOND THE UNKNOWN
REALLY
STORIES TO STAGGER THE IMAGINATION
ONLY 25¢
STEP 1
STEP 2
STEP 3
STEP 4
STEP 5
STEP 6

Figure 2

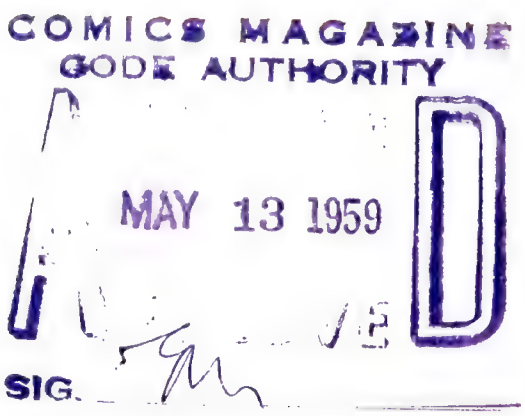


Figure 2
Comics Magazine Code Authority—Approval stamp was on the backs of many items, this was on the back cover of **Our Army At War** #90. Don't go anywhere without it!

Figure 3

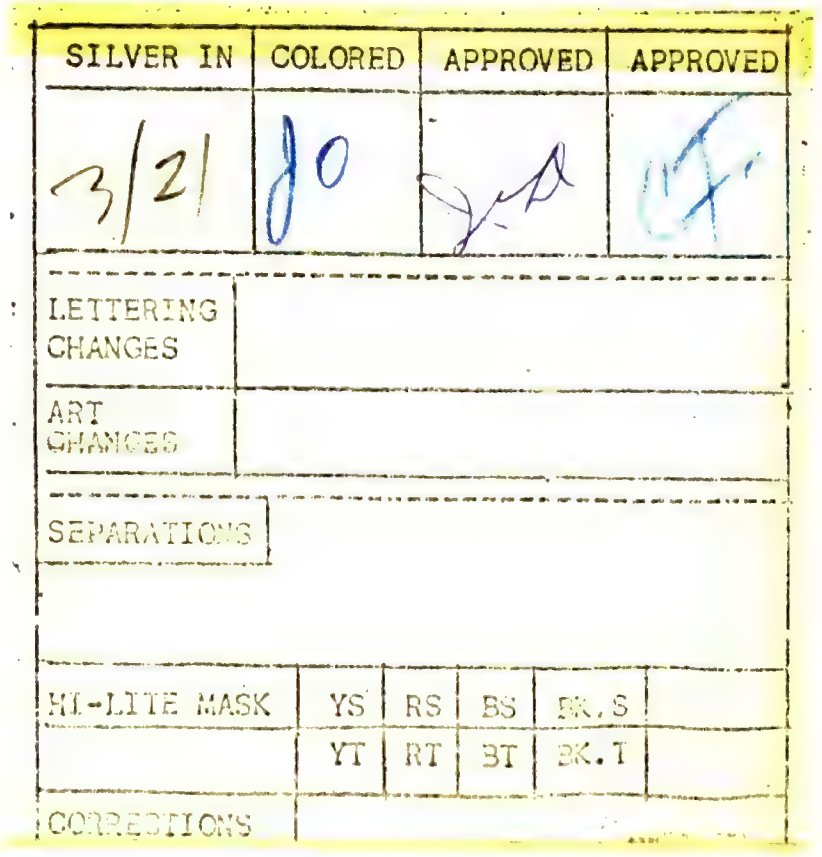


Figure 3
In-house check-off memo with initials (L to R) of Joe Orlando, Jack Adler and Carmine Infantino

Figure 4

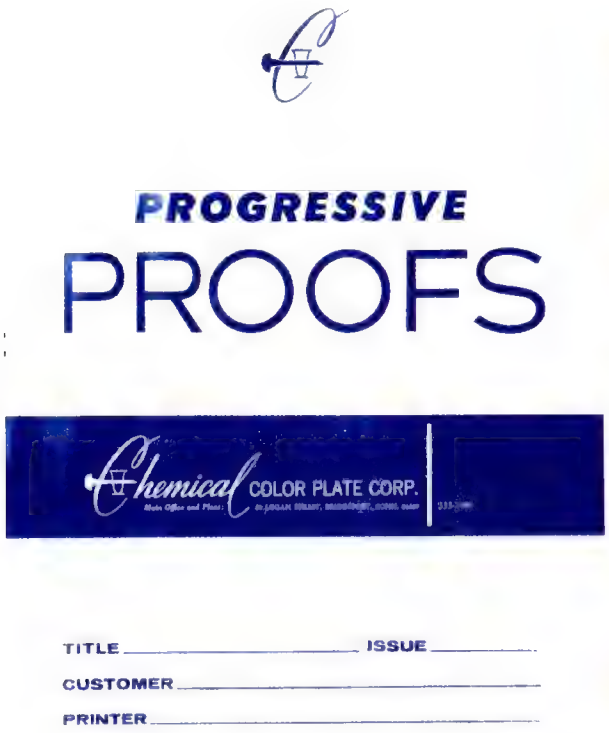


Figure 5

Figure 4
Cover of Progressive Proofs paper booklet that consisted of: A full bleed color cover, B+W line art, all color without black (see also Figure 11 and 12), red (magenta) only, blue (cyan) only and yellow (yellow) only

Figure 5
No matter how you served this cover, the Motor City was doomed! **Aquaman** #56, April 1971; note color key abbreviations

Figure 6

Figure 6
This issue was put out in the middle of the women's rights protests and it's certain Lane herself had a hand in making her name larger than her fickle, chauvinistic boy friend; **Lois Lane** #113, October 1971

Figure 7

Figure 8

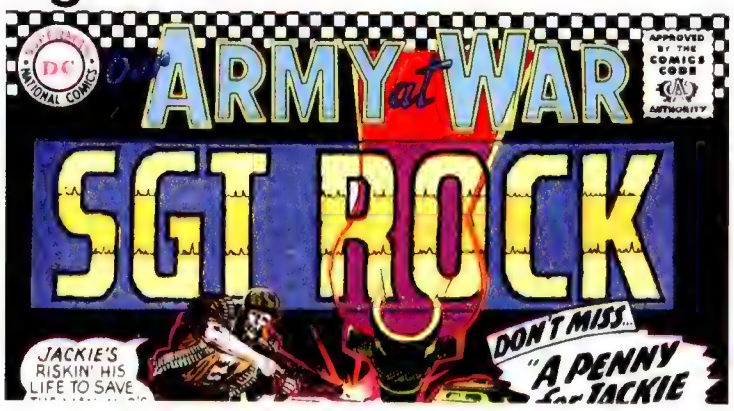
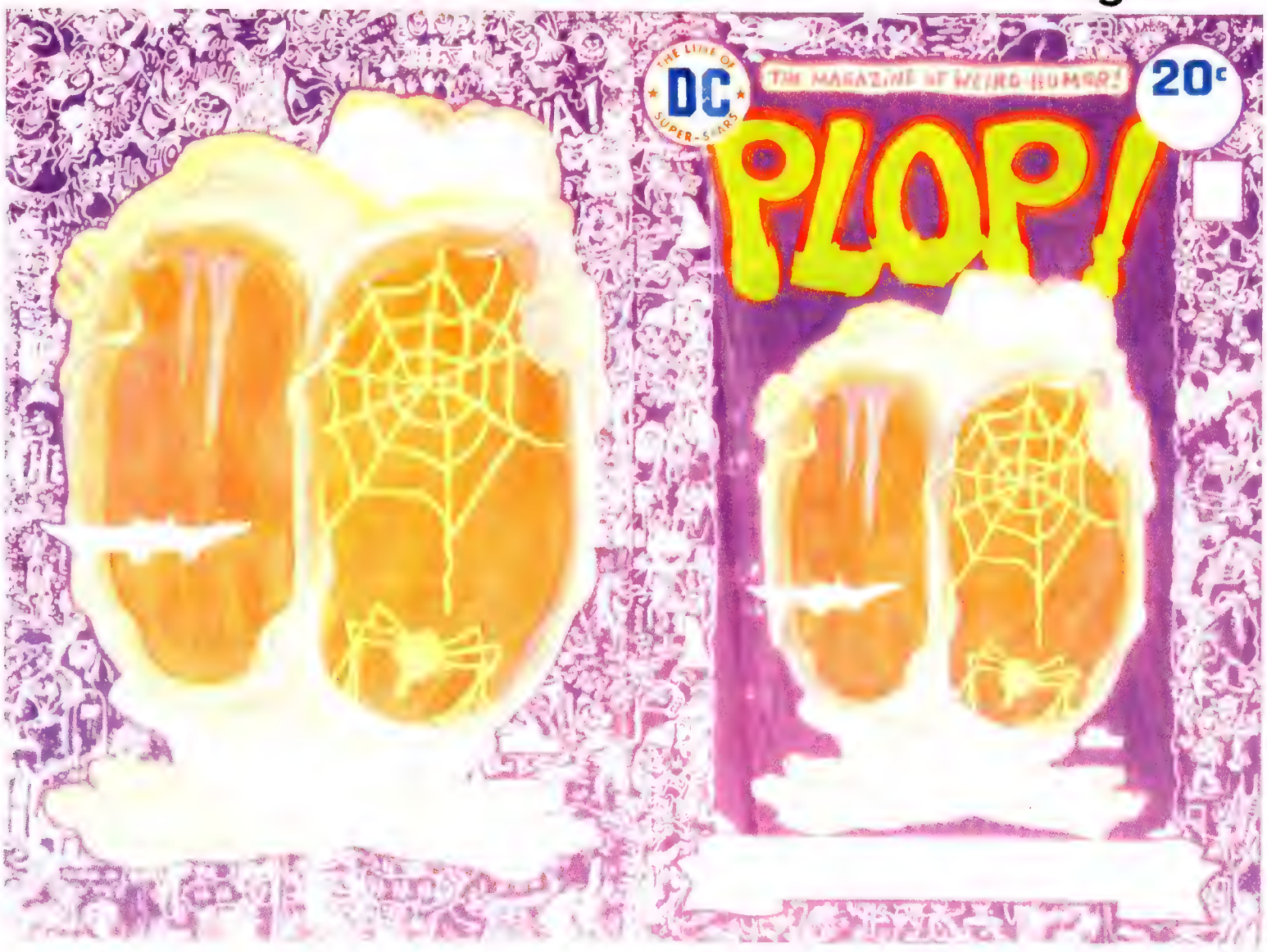


Figure 9

Figure 10

Figure 11



(Previous page)

Figure 7
Just imagine if the cover had remained #13, instead of the correct #136, the whole numbering system would have been blown away! **G.I. Combat** #136, July 1971

Figure 8
This could have started a whole new series called, "The Unknown Issues" with missing date, number and price. **Our Army At War** #?

Figure 9
This is strange with no Adam and missing part of DC logo on Adam **Strange Adventures** #220, October 1969

Figure 10
A little sleight-of-hand and presto!, a new release date for **Black Magic** #3, May 1974

Figure 11
Progressive proof layers with no black ink becomes the weirdest Wolverton ever; wild art for **Flop** #4, April 2, 1974 (entire back cover/front cover spread shown as it would be printed)

(this page)

Figure 11a
The CBM office copy of the published comic, showing the image with the black plate added (and a lot of wear!)

Figure 12
Another progressive proof, minus the black, which could have been the hippest thing ever in this title, or even an Andy Warhol exclusive; **Swing With Scooter** #33, May 1971

Figure 11a

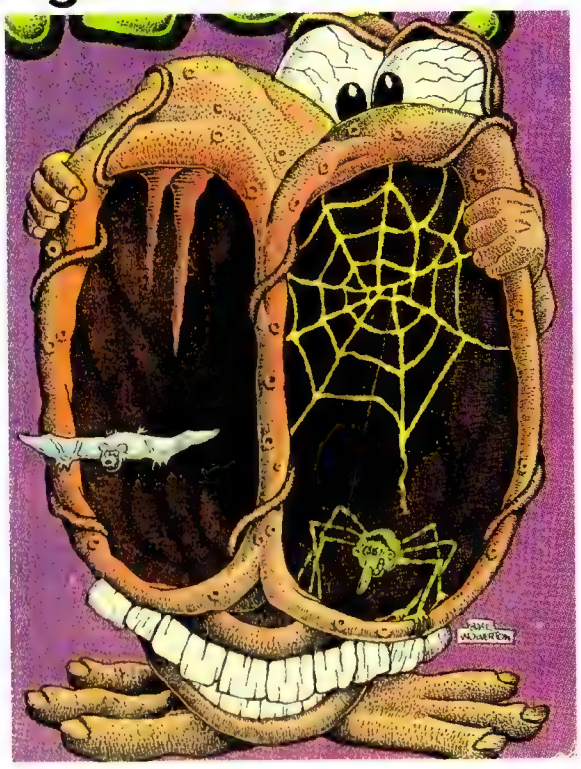


Figure 12

Figure 14

OUR ARMY AT WAR
FEB #151
14
ONCE THE FRENCH-MAN ALLOWED ME TO GET INTO POSITION "ABOVE AND BEYOND HIM"--HE WAS KAPUT! JUST AS CERTAINLY AS IF HE HAD PUT HIS NECK UNDER THE EXECUTIONER'S AXE! FOR I HAVE BEEN TRAINED TO KILL!

Figure 14
Showing Jack Adler's preference for saving Joe Kubert war work, he had kept all of **Our Army at War** #151 (Enemy Ace's 1st appearance) hand-colored interior pages; there is no mistaking why he kept this "random" issue

The Cover that Never Was—Twice!

As you may know, *Laurel & Hardy* #2 was never published, but the cover was drawn and produced for publication, and a record of it appeared in Jack's files. The #1 issue failed on the stands (but has had a recent surge of popularity, especially in high grade, in the collector market), and it looks like DC pulled out the big guns in #2 to revive it, bringing in ol' never-fail Superman as the butt end of a joke. But, alas, even Superman could not save the day and the comic was not completed. Even more ironic for the *L-H* #2 cover, *CBM* #85 was originally slated for March 2001 (we did a mockup cover) but when *CBM* changed staff and was in limbo for a while it looked like the unpublished #2 cover was once again going to beun-published on an unpublished magazine! But on the following page is the DC *Laurel and Hardy* cover #2!

In this issue, YOU be the editor!

There are 6 mistakes (minimum!) in this article, find them all and you win a place as a Junior Editor (or new one) for *CBM* next issue! (Soooo, where is Jack when we need him??!!) ANSWERS on page 79.

LAUREL & HARDY © 2001 LARRY HARMON, SUPERMAN © 2001 DC COMICS

WHITMAN MYSTERY - SOLVED! THE CHARTS (see page 45)

1982	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
ALIENS				2	
BROS. OF SPEAR				18	
BUCK ROGERS	14	15		16	
CINDERELLA			1		
DAGAR			19		
DOCTOR SOLAR		31			
GRIMMS GHOST STORIES	58		59		60
JUNGLE TWINS				18	
MIGHTY SAMSON			32		
FILES OF DR. SPECTOR				25	
SHADOW PLAY					1
SHROUD OF MYSTERY					1
SNOW WHITE			nn		
TRAGG				9	
TUROK	129		130		
TWIILIGHT ZONE				92	
WONDERFUL ADVS. OF PINOCCHIO			3		

1982	FEB	FEB/MAR	MAR	APR	MAY
BEEP-BEEP ROAD RUNNER			100	101	
BUGS BUNNY	233	234	235	236	237
CHIP 'N DALE	75	76	77		
DAFFY DUCK	139	140		141	
DAISY & DONALD	53			54	
DONALD DUCK	236	237	238	239	240
HUEY, DEWEY & LOUIE	72	73	74		
LITTLE LULU	264		265		
LOONEY TUNES	42			43	
MICKEY MOUSE	215			216	
PINK PANTHER	81		82	83	
POPEYE	166		167		
PORKY PIG	104			105	
SUPER GOOF	67	68	69		
TOM & JERRY	339	340		341	
TWEETY & SYLVESTER	113	114	115	116	
UNCLE SCROOGE	193	194	195	196	197
WDC&S	495	496	497	498	499
WINNIE THE POOH	27			28	
WOODY WOODPECKER	196			197	
YOSEMITE SAM	76		77	78	

AD TYPE 1

AD TYPE 3

AD TYPE 2

AD TYPE 4

1983	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG
BEEP-BEEP ROAD RUNNER			102 3/10	103 4/7	
BUGS BUNNY		238 3/10	239 3/10	240-41 4/7	242-43 5/12
CHIP 'N DALE	78 2/10	79 2/24		80 5/5	81 5/5
DAFFY DUCK			142 3/10		143 5/12
DAISY & DONALD		55 2/24		56 5/5	57-58 5/5
DONALD DUCK	241 2/10	242 2/24			
HUEY, DEWEY & LOUIE	75 2/10	76 2/24		77 5/5	77 5/12
LITTLE LULU				266 4/7	267 5/19
LOONEY TUNES			44 3/10		45 5/12
PINK PANTHER			84 3/24		85 5/19
POPEYE			168 3/24		169 5/19
PORKY PIG				106 4/7	107 5/12
SUPER GOOF		70 2/24			71 5/5
TOM & JERRY			342 3/24		343 5/19
TWEETY & SYLVESTER			117 3/10	118 4/7	
UNCLE SCROOGE	198 2/10-ND	199 2/10	200-01 3/24	202-03 ND	204-05 5/19
WDC&S	500 2/10	501 2/10		502-03 4/21	504-05 5/5 506 5/12
WINNIE THE POOH		30 2/24			31 ND
WOODY WOODPECKER			198 3/24	199 4/7	200 4/21
YOSEMITE SAM				79 4/7	80 4/21

AD TYPE 5

AD TYPE 6

1984	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL
ALICE IN W'LAND		1 1/5-2/1				
BEEP-BEEP ROAD RUNNER				104 2/16-3/15	105 ND	
BUGS BUNNY		244 12/22-1/14	245 12/22-1/19			
CHIP 'N DALE				82 2/16-3/15		83 4/15-5/3
DAFFY DUCK		144 12/1-12/28			145 3/1-3/24	
DAISY & DONALD						59 4/12-5/10
DONALD DUCK		243 1/5-2/1	244 1/5-2/1			245 4/12-5/10
HUEY, DEWEY & LOUIE			79 1/19-2/17	80 2/16-3/15		81 4/125/10
JUNGLE BOOK						1 4/5-5/3
LITTLE LULU		268 12/1-12/29				
LOONEY TUNES		46 12/1-12/29			47 3/1-3/24	
MICKEY MOUSE		217 ND			218 3/1-3/29	
PETER PAN		1 1/5-2/1				
PINK PANTHER		87 12/22-1/19				
POPEYE		170 12/22-1/19			171 3/8-4/5	
PORKY PIG	108 11/17-12/8				109 3/8-4/5	
SUPER GOOF				72 2/2-3/1	73 3/1-3/29	74 4/5-5/3
TOM & JERRY					344 3/8-4/5	
TWEETY & SYLVESTER	119 11/17-12/8			120 2/16-3/15	121 3/8-4/5	
UNCLE SCROOGE			206 1/19-2/17	207 1/19-2/17	208 3/22-4/19	209 3/22-4/19
WDC&S			507 2/2-3/1	508 2/2-3/1	509 3/22-4/19	510 3/22-4/19
WINNIE THE POOH			32 1/19-2/17			33 4/12-5/10
WOODY WOODPECKER		201 12/1-12/29				
YOSEMITE SAM	81 11/17-12/8					

Solving The Whitman Mystery

85 COMIC BOOK MKTPLACE

by Jon McClure

The 1980s changed Gold Key comics forever! The familiar Gold Key emblem vanished from the cover and was replaced by the Whitman logo. The overriding significant change was that the comics were gone from the newsstand! Without newsstand distribution, many readers and collectors no longer had access to the books. Some diligent collectors tracked down their favorite titles and found the comics in low numbers with spotty distribution in department stores until 1984, when the company finally gave up the ghost, apparently the victim of bad business.

Western Publishing began as the printer of Dell Comics in the 1930s, and continued as the publisher of Gold Key Comics in 1962, finally changing the name to Whitman Comics in 1980. Dell comics continued to publish TV and movie photo covers until 1971, when Gold Key assumed those titles as well. Western took over the cartoon character titles in 1962, including those of the longest published and most successful licensee, Walt Disney Productions. The most successful title was *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories*, followed by *Mickey Mouse*, *Donald Duck* and *Uncle Scrooge*. Publication of Warner Brothers, M-G-M, and Walter Lantz cartoon characters was also continued by Gold Key comics, and considering that Western Publishing was involved in the production of over 12,000 different comic books, they arguably have the third highest output in the history of comics.

When Western changed the name of their comics company from Gold Key to Whitman in early 1980, the oldest comics company to sell on the newsstands began a policy that would prove to be the beginning of the end. They all but abandoned newsstand sales and began selling almost exclusively through variety, drug, grocery, and department stores, and in bagged lots instead of individual issues. Whitman distributed "no number" reprints of Gold Key comics in bagged lots from late 1971 to the early 1980s, and only the stores that already carried the bagged lots continued to sell the Disney, Warner, and other titles after newsstand sales were abandoned.

Only a few comics stores were able to acquire any issues after the change, and those that did received spotty distribution. Many independent distributors didn't carry the Whitman comics because they were not returnable. By late 1981, Whitman color coded the numbers under the logo to specify direct copies.

A handful of distributors sold the comics to dealers unbagged, and presumably received the books from Whitman the same way. Most experts agree that leaving the newsstand was the single worst of the changes that took one of the greatest publishers in comics' history down the wrong path, sending its comic book publishing branch into a financial nosedive by steadily reducing the number of titles published and copies sold, and at the same time reducing their profit by lowering print runs.

With Phil Seuling losing ground to other distributors in the direct market, and with superhero comics the big rage of the time, Whitman comics were not a priority to many newsstand dealers, because of their cartoon content and inconsistent availability.

Publishing 270 comics in 1979, Whitman planned for only 167 in 1980. This rollback trend continued until their demise, dropping to a mere 47 issues published in 1984. Eventually mismanaged out of existence, the cartoon giant died with a whimper, leaving behind many questions about what happened, along with frustrated collectors and dealers who wanted to know how to date the 105 comics published after June 1982. But before we date those books and answer those questions, let's take a look at what Western did in the 20 years prior to its demise.

Like most publishers, Western paid close attention to what the market would bear. Publishers historically raise the price of their entire comic line at the same time as their competitors, or make the change at about the same time. Dell/Gold Key/Whitman was somewhat of an exception to this rule. Here's a quick breakdown of Western's dates of price changes:

DELL comics cover dated Mar 1961-Jun 1962: 15¢ covers
DELL/GOLD KEY Jul 1962-Aug 1968: 12¢ covers
GOLD KEY/WHITMAN Sep 1968-A pr 1973: 15¢ covers
GOLD KEY/WHITMAN May 1973-Jul 1974: 20¢ covers
GOLD KEY/WHITMAN Aug 1974-Aug1976: 25¢ covers
GOLD KEY/WHITMAN Sep 1976-Nov 1977: 30¢ covers

PRICE VARIANTS

GOLD KEY/WHITMAN Dec 1977-Mar 1979: 35¢ covers
GOLD KEY/WHITMAN Apr 1979-Jan 1981: 40¢ covers
WHITMAN Feb 1981-Jan 1982: 50¢ covers
WHITMAN Feb 1982-cancellation: 60¢ covers

The 15¢ cover comics Dell published from 3/61 to 6/62 are all relatively uncommon because Dell's circulation took a big drop in sales when potential buyers were confronted with a 15¢ per copy cost in March 1961. With all of the competition at a lower cover price, Dell's price increase meant you could only buy four Dell comics for the cost of five comics from another publisher—and that made a big difference to the average reader.

DC Comics increased their price to 12¢ per copy with comics cover-dated December 1961 through May 1969, and to 15¢ per copy from June 1969 through October 1971. Marvel mirrored DC's move when they increased their price to 12¢ per copy with comics cover dated February 1962 through July 1969, and to 15¢ per copy from August 1969 through October 1971. Dell restored the 12¢ cover price in July 1962 and sales improved, although they did return to a 15¢ cover price in September 1968, nine months before DC took the plunge, and eleven before Marvel dared. Oddly enough, Gold Key conservatively maintained a 15¢ cover price until April 1973, 18 months longer than DC and Marvel waited to increase their comics to 20¢ per copy.

Gold Key didn't always coordinate their cover price increases as smoothly as Marvel and DC did. *Jungle Twins* #10, with a 20¢ cover, and *Scooby Doo* #26, with a 25¢ cover, are both cover dated July 1974. If you like to be able to date your comics without opening the book, then the Gold Key versions are more desirable, not just because they are the first printings, but also because the Whitman "no number" copies delete the eight digit number under the Gold Key logo, making it impossible to date the book without opening it. Conversely, the Whitman reprints are much less common than regular editions, with an estimated 5-10% of existing copies bearing the Whitman logo. Completists have been hunting these variant comics for years, but they were not produced consistently, and some issues might not exist at all! Whitman copies were originally listed in *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* as worth less than Gold Key editions, but due to their scarcity they can sometimes bring a premium and sell above *Guide*.

Canadian editions were listed as price variants in the guide for years, and are collected today by completists, selling at or above guide, much like the Whitman reprints. Canadian editions were produced for issues dated May through August 1968, which have 15¢ covers, as well as issues dated April 1972 to April 1973, which have 20¢ covers. All Whitmans dated March 1980 or later have higher priced Canadian editions, the last of which appeared in 1984, with many titles sporting a 75¢ cover price for the last one or two issues.

Price variants, when they do exist, were meant to test the water, reflecting a publisher's desire to avoid a tactical error, like Western's disastrous and short-lived price hike in March 1961. Covers began threatening "still only 12¢" with issues cover dated January through November 1964, but they waited 4 more years before changing to 15¢ in September 1968.

Gold Key has some other variants which have been noted over the years. Overstreet lists the rare variants of *Star Trek* #s 1-3(6/67, 6/68, 12/68) and *Avengers* #1(11/68) with photo back covers, and other examples may exist as well.

From the late 1950s until the early 1960s, many Dells had content variants which are yet to be documented. Generally the variations were on the inside and/or outside back covers, with the original ads missing and a gag page, extra feature, or pin-up in its place. In most cases the ad edition is the more common and the extra art edition is scarcer. It is likely that they were made to be distributed in places where less or no ads would be desirable, like Canada or Britain. These older variants sell at a premium of up to double *Guide*, but on average sell for *Guide*-and-a-half when they are identified.

Top Comics, published by K. K. Publications and Gold Key, put out 17 issues dated July 1967, with exact reprints of original issues except for the covers, and (not so coincidentally) at the same time as the first *Star Trek* variant appeared. *Top Comics* are listed in *Overstreet* as all having come out at the same time. With no cover prices, they were distributed in bags, and in some cases, individually with 15¢ price stickers. The obscure reprint *Top Comics* title is the missing link which led to the hundreds of "no number" Whitman reprints collected today! Some issues of *Top Comics* are scarcer than the original issues they reprint! If you would like to learn more about this title, check out page 773 of the 31st edition of *The Overstreet Price Guide*.

Top Comics was the prototype for Western's new way of making money, by using their department store connections to sell bags of material reprinted specifically for that secondary market, material already paid for and being produced. A low print run of reprints added nicely to Western's bottom line, and with a large distribution system and customer base already in place, the experiment became reality in late 1971.

The following list contains 97 titles and 2467 total comics, for which "no number" Whitman reprints may exist, with cover dates ranging from November 1971 to February 1980.

Adam 12 1(12/73) - 10(2/76)
Addams Family 1(10/74) - 3(4/75)
Adventures of Mighty Mouse 66(3/79) - 172(1/80)
Adventures of Robin Hood 1(3/74) - 7(11/75)
Amazing Chan & the Chan Clan 1(5/73) - 4(2/74)
Aristokittens 2(4/72) - 9(10/75)
Baby Snoots 6(11/71) - 22(11/75)
Battle of the Planets 1(6/79) - 5(2/80)
Beagle Boys 10(11/71) - 47(2/79)
Beagle Boys vs Uncle Scrooge 1(3/79) - 12(2/80)
Beep Beep Roadrunner 27(12/71) - 88(2/80)
Boris Karloff Tales of Mystery 8(12/71) - 97(2/80)
Brothers of the Spear 1(6/72) - 17(2/76)
Buck Rogers 2(7/79) - 6(2/80)
Bugs Bunny 139(11/71) - 219(2/80)
Bullwinkle 3(4/72) - 25(2/80)
Chip 'N' Dale 13(12/71) - 64(1/80)
Christmas Parade 9(1/72)
Daffy Duck 72(11/71) - 127(2/80)
Dagar 1(10/72) - 18(12/76)
Daisy and Donald 1(5/73) - 41(11/79)
Dark Shadows 11(11/71) - 35(2/76)
Donald Duck 140(11/71) - 216(2/80)
Fat Albert 1(3/74) - 29(2/79)
Flash Gordon 19(9/78) - 27(1/80)
Fun-In 10(1/72) - 15(12/74)
Funky Phantom 1(3/72) - 13(3/75)
Golden Comics Digest 20(11/71) - 48(1/76)
Gold Key Champion 1(3/78) - 2(5/78)
Gold Key Spotlight 1(5/76) - 11(2/78)
Grimm's Ghost Stories 1(1/72) - 54(11/79)
Hair Bear Bunch 1(2/72) - 9(2/74)
Happy Days 1(3/79) - 6(2/80)
Harlem Globetrotters 1(4/72) - 12(1/75)
HR Pufnstuf 6(1/72) - 8(7/72)
Huey, Dewey, and Louie Junior Woodchucks 12(1/72)-61(2/80)
Inspector 1(7/74) - 19(2/78)
Jungle Twins 1(4/72) - 17(11/75)
Korak Son of Tarzan 44(11/71) - 45(1/72)
Krofft Supershow 1(4/78) - 6(1/79)
Lancelot Link, Secret Chimp 2(11/71) - 8(2/73)
Lidsville 1(10/72) - 5(10/73)
Little Lulu 207(9/72) - 257(1/80)
Little Monsters 15(12/71) - 44(2/78)
Little Stooges 1(2/72) - 7(3/74)
Lone Ranger 17(11/72) - 28(3/77)
Looney Tunes 1(4/75) - 30(2/80)
Magnus Robot Fighter 29(11/71) - 46(1/77)
Marge's Little Lulu 202(12/71) - 206(8/72)
Mickey Mouse 133(12/71) - 204(2/80)
Microbots 1(12/71)
Mighty Samson 21(8/72) - 31(3/76)
Moby Duck 12(1/74) - 30(2/78)
Mod Wheels 4(11/71) - 19(1/76)
Mystery Comics Digest 1(3/72) - 26(10/75)
New Terrytoons 14(11/71) - 54(1/79)
Occult Files of Dr. Spektor 1(4/73) - 24(2/77)
OG Whiz 4(11/71) - 11(1/79)
O'Malley and the Alley Cats 3(7/72) - 9(1/74)
Pink Panther 4(1/72) - 73(2/80)
Popeye 139(5/78) - 155(2/80)
Porky Pig 39(12/71) - 93(1/80)
Raggedy Ann and Andy 1(12/71) - 6(9/73)
Ripley's Believe It Or Not-! 30(12/71) - 94(2/80)
Roman Holidays 1(2/73) - 4(11/73)
Scamp 7(5/72) - 45(1/79)
Scooby Doo 9(12/71) - 30(2/75)
Smokey Bear 8(12/71) - 13(3/73)
Space Family Robinson 37(10/73) - 54(11/78)
Spine-Tingling Tales 1(5/75) - 4(1/76)
Star Trek 12(11/71) - 61(3/79)
Super Goof 19(11/71) - 57(2/80)
Tarzan 205(12/71 - 206(2/72)
Three Stooges 53(12/71) - 55(6/72)
Tom and Jerry 261(12/71) - 327(2/80)
Tragg and the Sky Gods 1(6/75) - 8(2/77)
Turok Son of Stone 76(1/72) - 125(1/80)
Tweety and Sylvester 21(12/71) - 102(2/80)
Twilight Zone 40(11/71) - 91(4/79)
Ufo & Outer Space 14(6/78) - 25(2/80)
Ufo Flying Saucers 3(11/72) - 13(1/77)
Uncle Scrooge 96(12/71) - 173(2/80)
Underdog 1(3/75) - 23(2/79)
Wacky Advs of Cracky 1(12/72) - 12(9/75)
Wacky Races 5(11/71) - 7(4/72)
Wacky Witch 5(1/72) - 21(12/75)
Walt Disney's Comics and Stories 374(11/71) - 473(2/80)
Walt Disney's Comics Digest 32(12/71) - 57(2/76)
Walt Disney's Showcase 6(1/72) - 54(1/80)
Walter Lantz Andy Panda 1(8/73) - 23(1/78)
Where's Huddles 3(12/71)
Winnie the Pooh 1(1/77) - 17(2/80)
Woodsy Owl 1(11/73) - 10(2/76)
Woody Woodpecker 120(11/71) - 187(2/80)
Yosemite Sam 5(12/72) - 65(2/80)

Although three of the 97 "no number" Whitman reprint titles are digest comics, they also fall within this time period, and in fact all three titles have several examples known to exist. The title with the most possible "no number" issues is *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories*, which has 100 issues which fall between the cut-off dates.

Another type of Whitman reprint also exists. DC titles from 1978-80 with 40¢ covers, and curiously enough, about half of them have the 40¢ cover price missing! The DC emblem appears as a Whitman emblem, and not one issue has its number on the cover. Although they range from 20 to 100 times scarcer than regular copies, the average scarcity is closer to forty to one. Whitman variants of *Wonder Woman* sell faster than a title like *Superboy*, but all of these variant books are sought after, and all are scarce in Near Mint condition.

The following 14 titles contain 124 issues with cover dates ranging from April 1978 to August 1980 that are known to exist:

Action #482(4/78), 485-492, 496, 498, 504-505, 507-508(6/80)
Batman #306(12/78), 307, 312-315, 320, 323-324, 326(8/80)
Brave and the Bold #145(11/79), 146, 151-155, 157, 159, 165(8/80)
DC Comics Presents #1(7-8/78), 2-4, 10-12, 14-15, 19, 21-22(6/80)
Flash #268(12/78), 273-276, 278, 283, 286(6/80)
Green Lantern #117(6/79), 118-119, 121(10/79)
Justice League #158(9/78), 1601-62, 168-169, 171-172, 176-179, 181(8/80)
Legion of Super-Heroes #261(3/80), 263-264, 266(8/80)
New Adventures of Superboy #2(2/80), 5-6, 8(8/80)
Superboy and the Legion of Super-Heroes #244(10/78), 248, 251-257(11/79)
Super Friends #14(10-11/78), 16, 21-23, 32(5/80)
Superman #321(3/78), 322-323, 325-327,329-331, 336-338, 340-341, 343-345, 348, 350(8/80)
Wonder Woman #250(12/78), 251, 255-262(12/79)

Not all of the DC titles' issues exist in Whitman variants during the time frame of April 1978 to August 1980. Taking several years to track down and complete, this list was compiled by Doug Sulipa and other interested collectors. The list is probably close to complete, but a few issues may yet remain undiscovered, and these will no doubt be among the scarcest examples.

All-New Collectors Edition C-56 (*Superman vs Mohammed Ali*), as well as *Marvel Special Edition* #3 (*Close Encounters of the Third Kind*), are oversized 1978 Whitman reprints that are also known to exist, and there may be others. Marvel Whitman reprints of the late 1970s have blank UPC boxes on the cover and were sold in three-packs; generally three sequential issues of the same title with a picture of the main character printed on the bag, exactly like the Gold Key and DC comics bags.

All Whitmans disappeared from the newsstand in March 1980. Despite the fact that newsstand dates were pointless, the bagged issues continued to have the month and year on the cover and in the indicia through June 1982. Since there were no returns without newsstand distribution, the dates on the books served no purpose, except the possible negative one of lowering the shelf life. Large delays, cancellations, and reductions in printing and distribution resulted from the stores not reordering product until what was on hand had sold. Some of the reprint material might sit for a year or two before finally seeing print or distribution, Western attempted to delete the original interior dates from the artwork on the first page of all comics, particularly those originally scheduled to see print in the second half of 1982. This decision obfuscated the comics' date of publication for nearly twenty years, creating a genuine "collector's and dealer's nightmare," by leaving dozens of issues and over 20 titles in *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* still plagued with unanswered questions.

Out of 107 undated issues published from 1983-84, only *Mickey Mouse* #218 escaped the editor's and production personel's notice. Dated on the first page page in the bottom panel as 90027-208 (August 1982), but not printed and released until March 1984 as the June issue, *Mickey Mouse* #218 is misleading, because it suggests the undated issues were published in 1982. As is the case with all of Western's comics, the first five numbers of the eight digit code represents the number designating a specific title, and the last three numbers are the year and month. The date at the bottom of issue #218 was left there by accident, and all other titles which suffered similar delays had their original dates carefully deleted from the art. Except for copyright dates in the indicia, or sometimes in the last panel at the end of a story, no other notations can be found on the books themselves.

Some issues of the fan newszine *The Comic Reader* #203(8/82) through #219(9/84) contain the release dates of all but six of the books. This allowed me to map out the correct month and year for each comic. Each date is consistent with the pattern used by *The Comic Reader* before the dates went missing, so, for example, a book with a release date of 2/24 would be a May issue. By using patterns of advertising found on the inside front and back covers as a means of dating the books, and with the surrounding issues already positioned, the placement of the undated books becomes clear.

The six comics that were not dated in *Comic Reader* are *Daisy and Donald* #56, *Mickey Mouse* #217, *Pink Panther* #86, *Uncle Scrooge* #202-203, and *Winnie-The-Pooh* #31. The following AD TYPES appear in issues dated February 1982 or later. AD TYPES #1-4 concern the 1982 charts only, and show a glimpse of the changes in house ads in the summer of 1982 [SEE CHARTS IN COLOR SECTION]. AD TYPES #5-6 are the keys to determining the placement of the dateless books, because the 1983 CHART shows that every title has a Type 2 ad pattern through June and changes to Type 3 in July. Ad patterns are combinations of ads, one on the inside front cover, and one on the inside back cover. The charts are laid out to allow the greatest "spread" of issues without breaking the pattern established by Whitman and continued by *The Comic Reader*. The release dates of the comics are listed underneath the issue number of each book. Wherever the chart assigns two different months for comics released on the same day, by using the release dates you can categorize them together in the same month, if you prefer.

The following combinations list the six types by front cover, back cover, and dates of appearance.

Ad Type 1: Little Lulu - Daffy Duck (2/82)
Ad Type 2: Super Goof - Popeye (2-5/82)
Ad Type 3: Samson, Dagar, Turok - Cinderella, Snow White, Pinocchio (3-5/82)
Ad Type 4: Tweety and Sylvester, Beep Beep, Yosemite Sam - Little Lulu,Popeye, Pink Panther, Woody Woodpecker, Tom and Jerry (3-6/82)
Ad Type 5: Huey, Dewey, and Louie - Little Lulu (4-6/83)
Ad Type 6: Super Goof - Daffy Duck (7-8/83, 2-7/84)

Looking at the 1983 chart, you can see that it shows *Daisy and Donald* #57-58 are dated August, so the Type 6 ad pattern inside issue #56 places it indisputably in July. The same chart shows that *Uncle Scrooge* #202-203 also dates July because of the issues on either side, further confirmed by the Type 6 ad pattern inside. *Mickey Mouse* #217 in the 1984 chart is less obvious, but it ends up in the March position, because of the Type 6 ad pattern, the position of issue #218 in June, and the titles *Daffy Duck*, *Looney Tunes* and *Popeye*, which share exactly the same March-June schedule for the same time period. *Pink Panther* #86 has no where else to go but the February column of the 1984 chart, because #85 appears at the end of the 1983 chart in the August position, and because #87 appears in the March slot of the 1984 chart.

Finally, *Winnie-The-Pooh* #31 in the 1983 chart is dated August, although only one other title, *Super Goof*, fits exactly the same pattern. Because #31 has a Type 6 ad pattern, June is eliminated as a possibility, and July seems unlikely, not just because no other title shares that pattern, but because there are three reasons to believe *Winnie-The-Pooh* #31 is dated August.

The first reason is that only three titles out of twenty (*Beep Beep, the Roadrunner*; *Donald Duck* and *Tweety and Sylvester*) did not have an August issue, which was the largest output of comics by Western in one month since February 1982. The second reason is that no title in 1983 had less than two issues published, and without #31 in August, *Winnie-The-Pooh* would have only issue #30 in May. The third reason is that twelve out of the twenty 1983 titles have two issues in them. *Winnie-The-Pooh* #31 brings the total to thirteen. Although *Winnie* #31 could conceivably be placed on the 1984 chart, the February position would make no sense, and the March position is only slightly plausible because one other title, *Donald Duck*, shares the same pattern for the same time period. The reasons to place *Winnie-The-Pooh* #31 on the 1983 chart overwhelm the second possibility.

Western experimented by publishing ten extra comics between the months of February and March of 1982, but instead of the usual code, these issues were dated "113." The ten comics are *Bugs Bunny* #234, *Chip 'N' Dale* #76, *Daffy Duck* #140, *Donald Duck* #237, *Huey, Dewey, and Louie* #73, *Super Goof* #68, *Tom and Jerry* #340, *Tweety and Sylvester* #114, *Uncle Scrooge* #194 and *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* #496. All have a Type 2 ad pattern. Eight of the titles were published monthly, and had "113" issues fall between their February and March issues. When bagged distribution began, having no dates on the books made sense, and not having to assign any months to the issues gave Western more flexibility to experiment. They took this to an extreme in 1983, publishing extra issues in July and August for several titles. The most unusual example is *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* #502-506, because all five issues were published and released in only three weeks!

The Comic Reader #209(3/83) also comments that "What makes dating these issues so difficult is that Western...in order to fulfill contracts with Disney, is publishing eight issues of *Uncle Scrooge* in four months...," an action which became necessary due to large gaps in production. Gaps and irregularities plagued Western's bagged distribution from the beginning, creating scarce and desirable collectibles like the elusive *Uncle Scrooge* #179(9/80), which sold for $1200 more than once in 2000. All Whitman comics dated August through December 1980 are scarce, as are all undated issues from 1983-84, and in many cases the issues immediately preceding or following these dates are also uncommon.

This is because independent newsstand distributors and direct accounts never received them!

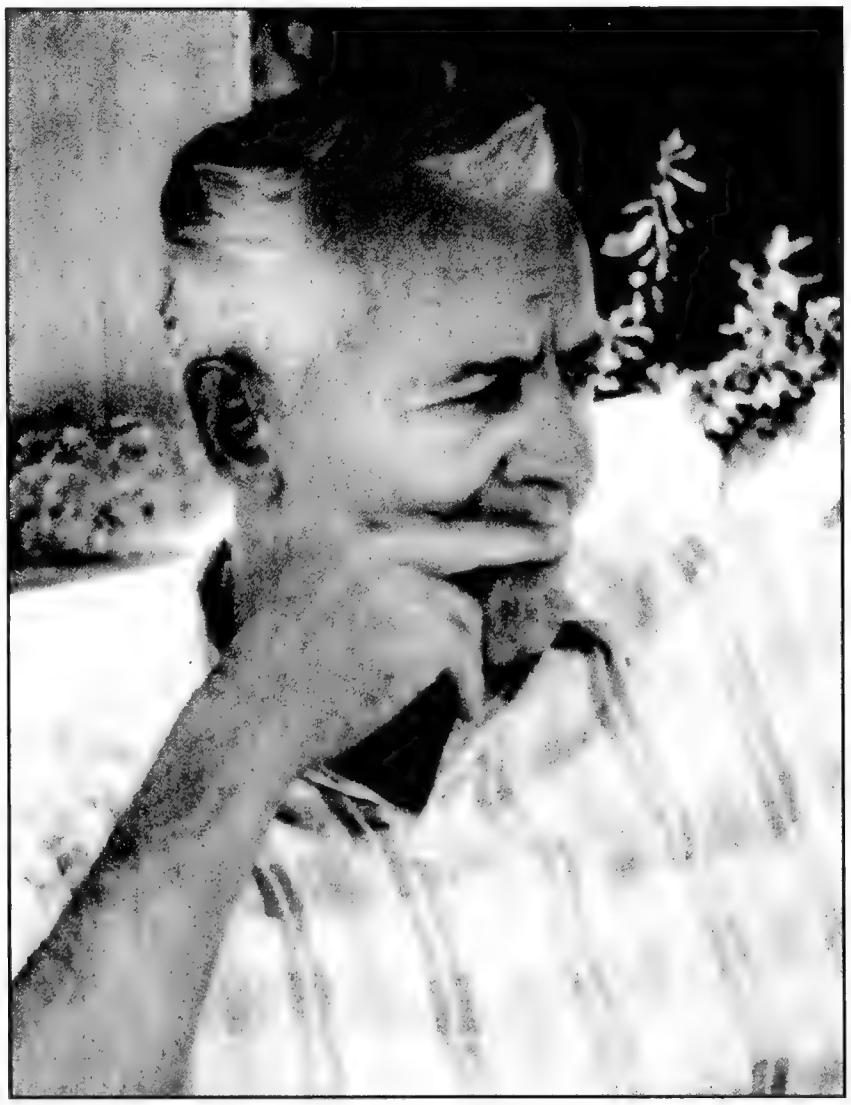
The practice of using ad patterns to resolve other comic book mysteries and to date comics is worth keeping in mind as a research tool, although it can be time consuming to locate and check such a large number of comics. On the other hand, the ways in which a publisher chooses to promote their products can provide a useful glimpse into the company's character, and can help answer questions that would otherwise be impossible to address.

END PART ONE (OF TWO)

PART TWO (OF TWO) IN CBM #86

THE PULP CONNECTION

Robert Turner in a thoughtful pose, from the jacket for a book he wrote about writing



You've probably never heard of Robert Turner. Most people today wouldn't recognize the name. During his heyday, he was a frequent contributor to pulp magazines. A workaday writer, Turner never made it big. Although he wrote many stories, books and TV shows, Turner is not remembered for any one book or character. He was, in the politest, most honorable sense of the term, a hack.

Like many pulpsters in the 1940s, Turner found that there was good money to be had writing comics on the side. And for a relative unknown, he wrote tons of scripts for many of the major comic lines during their formative days, from Centaur to Quality.

The totality of Turner's contributions to comics may never be discovered. Writer's bylines were rare in those days. Some of what we know about them can be gleaned from a pair of articles he penned for *Writer's Digest*, "The Comics are Calling!" and "Calling All Comics" in the October and November 1941 issues. These two historically important pieces were designed to alert Turner's fellow pulp writers to the growing and lucrative comics markets, and they give a fascinating glimpse of the problems comic book editors had with what was even in 1941 a fast-changing market.

"Comics have been going through a similar metamorphosis to what the pulps did a few years back," Turner wrote. *"Only more swiftly. At first comic book artists did their own stories and anything went. But the novelty of poor stories told in picture form wore off for the young (and many not so young) readers. Publishers held war councils, made analysis of their competitor's products and came to their senses. The whole field improved. It was decided that good stories were a fine idea for the comics and they must have some. The question was, where would they come from?*

"Professionals in other writing fields were loath to leave their lush literary pastures for a new, untried and at that time poorly paying medium. So entered a group of local lads who were amateur writers but professional opportunists. They knew somewhat of story structure from having failed in other mediums like radio and playwriting. Comic book editors accepted them in desperation. Their simply plotted stories were a vast improvement over no stories at all. This small clique have been carrying the burden of supplying the enormous amount of material needed by the comics ever since. Which is much too long."

Turner quotes Fred Gardener, Managing Editor of Magazine Publishers, aka Ace Comics; (This person is not to be confused with early comics artist, Fred Guardineer. They are separate individuals.) on his view of the problem:

"Bob, comic book stories have got to change. We've reached the stage where any kid reader starts a story and knows just how it's going to go through. They're familiar with every situation because we've used them over and over. And there goes your suspense.

"Why," Gardener continued, *"they even know what the dialogue will be. Comic Book heroes always say 'Oh, so you want to play, eh?' as he bats hell out of a bunch of creeps. We can't get away with that stuff any more.*

"The day of action for action's sake alone is over. Comic book heroes have got to get some dimension. They've got to be humanized. A good comic story should have pulp stuff—characterization, twists in plot, good dialogue, a minor action climax

The Unsung Robert Turner:

Hacking Away in the Four-Color Forest

by Will Murray

every couple of pages and a major one at the end. And we're going to have to look to the pulp writers of the country to give us these things. They must be broken into the field!"

Along this line, Turner reveals that such pulp luminaries as Otto Binder, Robert Leslie Bellem, Robert Hyatt, Roy Horn and Henry Kuttner are already writing comics.

Turner explains that one way Gardener copes with filling magazines like *Our Flag Comics* and *Lightning Comics* with his small scripting staff is by rarely giving them the same character to write from issue to issue. Turner also provides a rare insight into how early the assembly line process entered the field. Comic writers, he explained, always start with a synopsis of 500 to 1,500 words, for which they are paid between five and 25 dollars.

"If there is time," he blithely informs aspiring scripters, *"you might get the assignment to write up the working script. If not, it will be turned over to a local writer, familiar with the form."*

Turner also has interesting notions on creating characters.

"It will take several issues of nothing else in the Writer's Digest to tell you about all the different types of characters being used in the comics," he coaches. *"You don't need to know them all. Just pick out a few magazines and aim them at the types used therein. But just a word of warning about the patriotic supermen you're bound to run into, these are supermen dressed in red, white and blue uniforms who go about blasting spies and saboteurs in defense of America. In some instances, these star-spangled human dreadnoughts zoomed right over to Hitler and Mussolini and tweaked their dictatorial noses. That admirable but futile action has already been done to death. Though you may see it currently featured, lay off."*

This admonition is funny because a few paragraphs later, Turner admits to having created a Captain America knockoff, as well as a Human Torch clone:

"If you want to take a crack at creating a new comic book feature, hit some new angles here also; not only in your story, but for the character himself. I'll use a couple of new ones I recently sold for examples—a patriotic superman called The Flag, who was born with a flag-like birthmark on his chest which gives him super powers and who zooms through the air, leaving red-white-and-blue speed lines after him; and a super woman who is mistress over flames and calls herself Wildfire; and a taxi-driver who runs into adventures on the job; a swing band leader, etc."

Turner then gives sound, practical advice as to how to write the pre-war star-spangled superhero.

"And if you pick one of these patriotic gentlemen to write a new adventure for, be different. Avoid spies stealing government plans and blue prints, kidnapping generals and defense heads, or plotting to blow up munitions plants and army bases. Get some new angles."

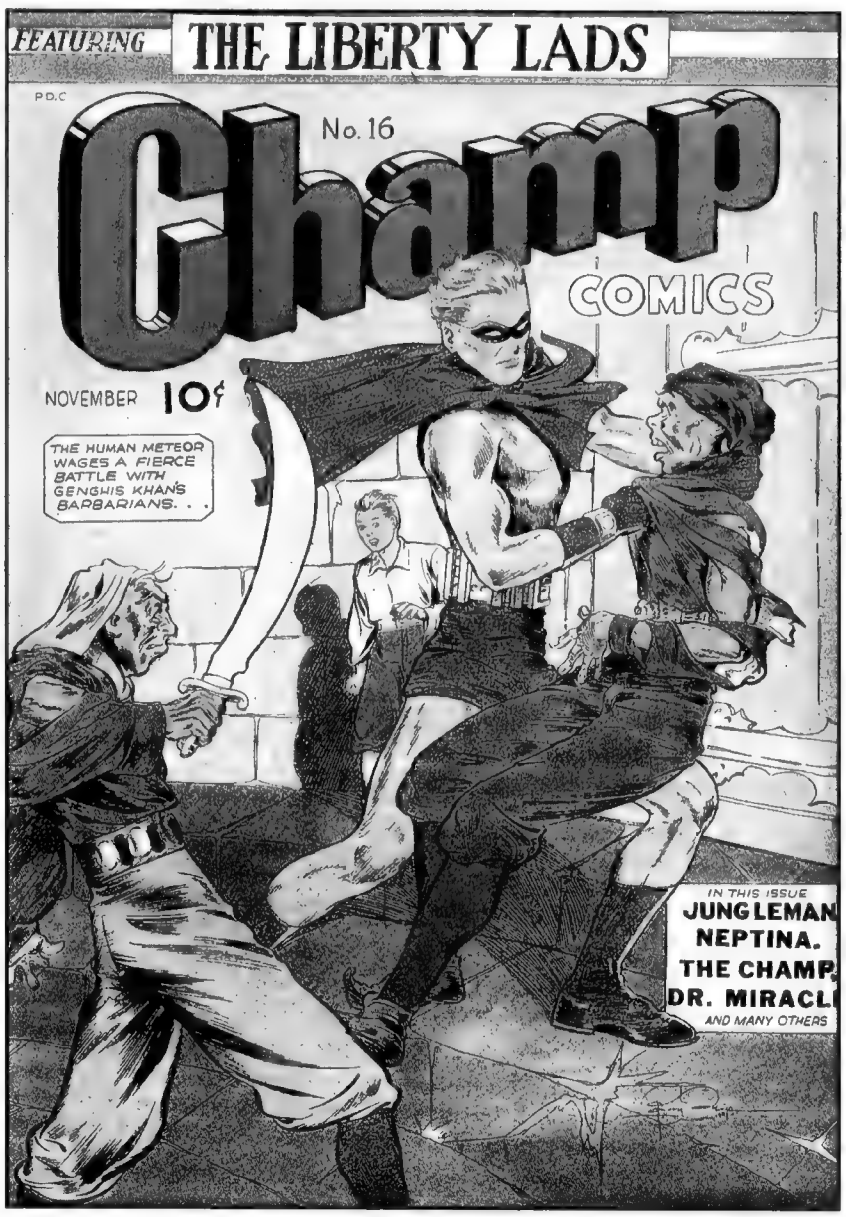
Again, it's amusing to note Turner's example of "new angles:"

"Don't be afraid to get human interest into your comic yarns," he adds. *"Such as a kid who in desperation to get a large sum of money for an operation for his crippled sister, accepts what looks to be a harmless job for some foul-smelling characters of the underworld. He then finds out that he's got to do more than he originally contracted for—some really vile things. He tries to back out of the whole thing. He can't. He's already in too deep. The hero then pulls the kid out of the spot, gives him a chance to vindicate himself.*

"Little sub-plots like that must be woven carefully into the main story, not stick out like a clog of ink on a typewriter key.

"You don't have to always involve kids in your stories either. It helps if you can, but don't force it. It's just the old idea of making the hero sympathetic, giving him some other motivation other than bringing crooks to justice. You do this with other types of stories. Put it in your comic synopses. But please omit orphans' picnics, home for old folks, etc. These have been reamed, steamed and dry-cleaned in the comics."

It's fascinating to realize that only three years into the Golden Age of the Superhero, writers and editors were already scrambling to stay ahead of their increasingly sophisticated readership.



It's a comet, it's a shooting star, it's the Human Meteor! who Turner created for **Champ Comics**, a short-lived title he regards as one of the class acts of the Golden Age; #16 (Nov 41)

THE PULP CONNECTION

Aware that even pulp writers of the day might be looking down their noses at the crude early comic book field, Turner admonishes:

"In case you might be self-conscious about writing for the comics, fearful that it will hurt your reputation or mar any other typewriting you're engaged in, forget it. I've sold some of my best pulp stories since I've been writing comics.

"In my estimation," he adds, *"it's also good training for motion picture writing. You think in scenes. You picture your action and you can't let dialogue get long-winded and out of hand.*

"Writing for comics can easily take you into much more profitable fields, the big-time newspaper syndicates, the juvenile book trade, radio and motion pictures, if you've got the stuff. To prove the point, there's Superman, Blue Beetle and Captain Marvel, comic characters already in the movies, on the air and in hundreds of newspapers."

As time passed, comic books would lead Robert Turner to greater horizons, too.

Turner goes on to reveal that he also writes "Rex, King of the Deep" for Dell's *The Funnies* and in the companion article mentions doing Magno, the Magnetic Man with Jim Mooney for *Super-Mystery Comics* as well as material for Comic Corporation's *World Famous Heroes Magazine*. He speaks of having written two entire comic books a month—the equivalent, he says, of a 50,000-word pulp novel.

Turner is pretty pragmatic about writing for comics circa 1941. It's lucrative, checks are fast, and although you retain no rights to your work, comics scripting helps a writer hone his craft. He adds the following bizarre statement: "Jack Woodward once told me that he considers the comics the best training ground for television writing that an author could find."

In Turner's case, this statement would ultimately become prophetic. But in 1941, TV was a novelty that wouldn't really develop into a serious rival to radio and movies for almost a decade.

Then Turner goes on to raise a hope that seemed far-fetched in 1941 and actually would be many long years in coming:

"But perhaps as individual writers get along, in this field they can save some of their rights, and perhaps the screen credit idea will some day be used in the comics—story by so-and-so from an idea by whozis."

Robert Turner was long out of the comic book field and into the TV scripting phase of his writing career by the time this prediction became reality. But he did return to his comics days one last time in his 1970 autobiography, *Some of My Best Friends are Writers But...I Wouldn't Want My Daughter to Marry One*. In this half-forgotten book, he goes into great detail about the early comic book industry, and his unknown role writing for some of the more obscure houses of that time. It turns out that Turner was not merely one of the more prolific comics scripters of the early

Magno and sidekick Davey rescue a voluptous victim from the fatal clutches of an evil idol on the cover of **Super-Mystery** #4 (Nov 40)

Golden Age, but single-handedly wrote and edited the entire line of one comics chain!

A young aspiring writer in the late 1930s, Robert Turner was working a day job at New York University when he first broke into print, supplying girlie stories for W. W. "Bill" Scott of Ultem Publications. His goal was to crack the pulp magazine field—the so-called Pulp Jungle—but it was a tough trek. Ultem ultimately folded. But it led to Turner's next big break.

"Shortly after the fold up of the Ultem magazines," Turner wrote, *"a comics magazine featuring a superhero called Superman burst like a bomb on the newsstands all over the country, and before long all over the world. Earlier there had been some comic books published, but they were mostly, if not all, reprints of syndicated comic strips:* Maggie and Jiggs [sic], Little Orphan Annie, *etc.*

"Superman was brand new. When the sales figures got around, everybody and anybody who could get credit with a paper company and an engraver and had distribution connections came

up with imitations and went into the comic book business. One of these was my old friend Ultem Publications. Under another corporation, they were going to publish a group of comics. Bill Scott called me and asked me whether I would like to write some scripts for them. I told them I'd never done anything like that. He said neither had anybody else, and it was a booming business."

And so Robert Turner found himself working for the early Centaur line, probably with the kickoff titles, *Funny Pages* and *Funny Picture Stories* in 1938. He undoubtedly contributed to the earliest issues of *Amazing Mystery Funnies* and *Amazing Man*. It's entirely possible that he scripted such early pre-superhero strips as "The Clock" and "The Arrow."

"So I was suddenly in it," he explained. *"All over the place. As soon as I had credits with Scott's magazines, I was able to get assignments from almost every publisher in the business. It was a weird writing era. Actually, there were two markets. One was for scenario-type scripts, including dialogue (balloons), captions, and general instructions to the artist as to backgrounds and action to be drawn into each panel. The second market was for short short stories, from a thousand to fifteen hundred words, straight narrative. Because of some obscure postal law, each comic magazine had to have at least two pages of solid type in order to qualify for cheaper mailing rates. I wrote these and the scripts for regular comic book characters by the bushel. Once I wrote five short short stories in one evening. I couldn't do that today if it killed me, simple as it seemed at the time. At this point I was still holding down a full-time job."*

Toiling at Centaur evidently made little impression on him, because Turner doesn't go into any specifics. But the relationship continued until Centaur folded. Elsewhere, he has admitted to scripting *Red Riley*, *Stars and Stripes*, *C-M-O Comics* and *World Famous Heroes Magazine* for them in 1941-42.

"The price paid me for comics scripts in those early days was from one and a half to three dollars a comic book page," he notes. *"Stories ran from three to ten or twelve pages for lead stories. The average was around six to eight pages. Thus, you make from eight to twenty-five dollars a script. You could do a long script or short ones in one day. After the Superman type of comic, except for the original and a few of the better imitations, wore itself out and virtually disappeared, it was followed by other fads. There were World War II combat stories and superheroes who wore flags or some kind of red, white, and blue uniform. It pains me to admit it, but I once created one of these characters, called Star Spangled Branner."*

In fact, Turner seemed to have specialized in writing imitations of The Shield and Captain America. Regrettably, he fails to go into great detail about the various lines and strips he wrote. One he does single out was *Champion Comics*, published by the Worth Publishing Company, later to metamorphose into Harvey Comics.

"This particular magazine tried to give a little more quality to the kids," he wrote. "It was less sensational than many of the others. It had a certain class that the others didn't. When I first saw it on the stands, I liked it. But I thought the center spread short story was atrocious. I went home and wrote what I thought was a good one. This one wasn't just a simple, slam-bang action piece. I only vaguely remember it, but it seems to me that it was about a boy and his dog, and I thought I'd better put a lot of heart into it, that it was a much better story than I'd ever written for any of the other comics.

"Ordinarily I'm not brash or brassy. What prompted me to do so on this occasion I'll never know. I have never since tried to sell anyone a story verbally by telling them how good it was; I've always tried to let my scripts stand or fall on their own merits. Anyhow, one noontime I breezed into Leo Greenwald's office. His was a small outfit, and he had no secretary, as I remember. I promptly told him all about the other magazines I was selling short stories to, and that I'd just done one that was too good for them and perhaps for that very reason he might like it. But, I told him, I couldn't sell this masterpiece for five bucks (the price I'd been getting from the other markets)—I wanted ten dollars for this one.

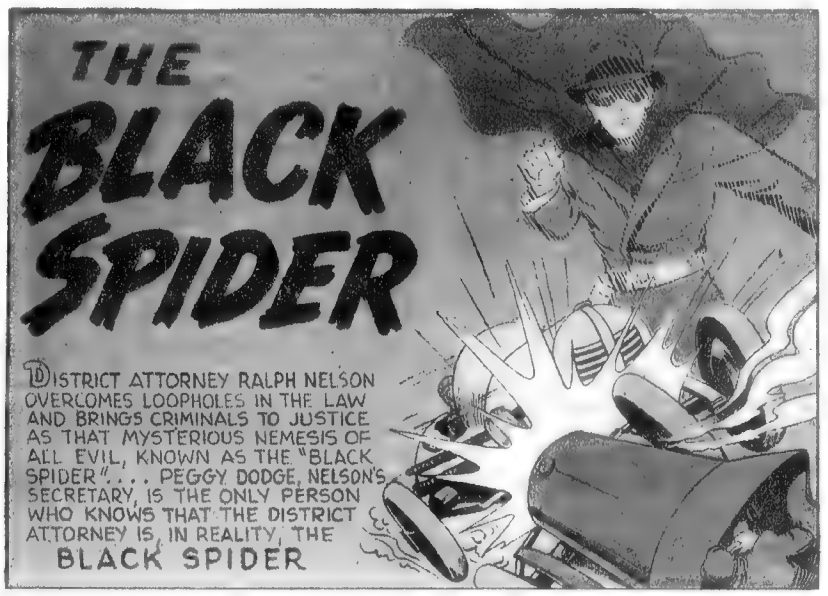
"He smiled gently, reached out his hand, and said: 'Let me see the story.'

"He read it right there, while I stood around jittering, wishing I hadn't shot off my big mouth. Then he put the manuscript down, reached into drawer, pulled out his checkbook, and wrote me a check.

"As he handed it to me, he asked: 'What are you doing for lunch?'

"Following that luncheon I did a number scripts for *Champion Comics*, as well as a great many of the short short stories. I also created features for him; one of them, I recall, was called "Robin Hood Jones" and was nothing but a steal from Robin Hood, of course, switched to modern times."

Champion Comics launched in late 1939, faltered, and changed title to *Champ Comics* a year later. It featured characters like the Blazing Scarab, Neptina and the Human Meteor. Turner admitted to scripting Duke O'Dowd, the cab driver who later became the Human Meteor (not to be con-


THE
BLACK
SPIDER
DISTRICT ATTORNEY RALPH NELSON OVERCOMES LOOPHOLES IN THE LAW AND BRINGS CRIMINALS TO JUSTICE AS THAT MYSTERIOUS NEMESIS OF ALL EVIL, KNOWN AS THE "BLACK SPIDER"... PEGGY DODGE, NELSON'S SECRETARY, IS THE ONLY PERSON WHO KNOWS THAT THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY IS, IN REALITY, THE
BLACK SPIDER

A Turner hero for Ace, The Black Spider kept pet tarantulas to terrorize criminals

fused with Centaur's Dash Dartwell, the Human Meteor—although Turner might have written that too!), Johnny Fox, and yet another star-spangled strip, Liberty Lads.

"Unfortunately," Turner explained, "Champion Comics *was not long-lived. It's hard to make it with only one magazine, bucking the big chain houses. I hated to see it go. Leo Greenwald was one of the finest gentlemen I ever met in the publishing business. On the days I had luncheon with him and Frank Armer, the publisher of* Spicy *and* Private Detective *magazine and a personal friend of Leo's, I sat spellbound, listening to inside talk about the publishing business. Although at that time my goal was still to sell my first pulp story, it never occurred to me to try to make it through my acquaintance with Frank Armer. But I did sell some stories to* Private Detective, *through an agent, some years later."*

Turner may never have suspected that Armer had been Harry Donenfeld's pulp editor, and early on was involved with DC Comics. Through him, he might have crashed the most lucrative comic book market of that time. Armer also published *Super-Detective*, a pulp that featured the exploits of an American Indian copy of Doc Savage called Jim Anthony. Turner's Johnny Fox seems to be a swipe of that character.

Another publisher Turner hooked up with was Dell. For editor Al Delacourte, he scripted Rex, King of the Deep, Sky Hawk, Sky War and assorted war stories. Some appeared in *The Funnies*, others in *War Comics* and *War Stories* and possibly *War Heroes*. This was Turner's highest-paying market at that time.

Delacourte put Turner in touch with Stephen Schlesinger, a packager who produced two syndicated newspaper strips, *Red Ryder* and *King of the Royal Mounted*. After producing about two month's worth of continuity for both features, Turner quoted a high figure for his work. Evidently too high, because Schlesinger paid him off and his brush with the lucrative newspaper strip field ended forever.

But this bad break, too, led to a bigger one:

"Meanwhile, though, I had another ace in the hole, literally and figuratively," he wrote. *"While diddling around with the syndicated stuff, I had answered an advertisement for a comics magazine editor and had received a prompt response and interview at Ace Magazines, Incorporated. At that time, Ace was not only publishing comics but was one of the larger pulp houses and also published a couple of successful confession magazines.*

"The interview was with a gentleman named Fred Gardener, who was the art director and sort of overall editorial supervisor of the whole works. He is today, I believe, the publisher of his own group of confession magazines. In any event, Fred Gardener was a stocky, baldheaded man with a bristling mustache, an aggressive, business-like manner, and an often surprising, spontaneous sense of humor. Over the years we came to be good friends.

"He briefed me on what the duties of my job would be: writing the scripts, all of them, for their five comics magazines, which came out bi-monthly as I recall. He said that would not be as much of a chore as it might seem, because I would have available tons of their published pulp magazines, from which I could lift plots. I would also have to check out the work of the artists when they brought it in and think up striking cover illustrations for all five magazines.

"He then asked me what kind of salary I was looking for. The answer came right off the top of my head, and I'm not sure why I picked that figure—perhaps because I thought it was low enough to give me the job, and I was pretty excited about getting in on the inside of a big pulp publisher. So I told him $60 a week.

"Gardener pursed his lips, plucked at his mustache, and frowned. He shook his head. 'I'm sorry,' he said. 'We were thinking in the neighborhood of forty.'

"'Sorry,' I said. I stood up. 'I don't particularly the care for that kind of neighborhood.'

"He laughed and told me to think it over, and if I should change my mind to call him back within a few days.

"When the Schlesinger deal blew up, I did just that. I told Fred that I would meet him halfway; I would take $50 a week. What I didn't know, of course, was that some of their experienced associate pulp editors were getting only forty to forty-five dollars a week. There was a moment's hesitation, and then he asked when I could come to work. I told him in one week, and the job was mine. I exultantly gave notice to my boss at N.Y.U. I could hardly wait for that week to end so could begin my new career as editor and staff writer!"

The year was 1940. Ace Magazines was in truth, like Martin Goodman's pulp outfit, on the lower end of the publishing scale. Ace was also two outfits, A. A. Wyn's Magazine Publishers, and Periodical House, nominally run by his wife, Rose. The comics belonged to the Periodical House arm. Contrary to Turner's recollection, they had only two titles in 1940, *Sure-Fire Comics*, launched in June, and *Super-Mystery*, which followed a month later. While *Super-Mystery* enjoyed a long run, *Sure-Fire* ran only four issues before being retitled *Lightning Comics*. Ace's next releases, *Our Flag* and *Banner*, didn't appear until mid-1941.

Obviously, Turner's memory, 30 years later, had failed him. These have to be the two comics a month he claimed to have written in the 1941 *Writer's Digest* article.

This is how Turner described being in the editorial hot seat at the early Ace comics line:

"That particular career was short-lived, but it did lead to an association with Ace Magazines—and later, with Ace Books—that was to last for a number of years. I may have kept the job the six months, but possibly it was an even shorter length of time. The job was a back-breaker, but there were side benefits that were extremely educational for a beginning writer. Although by that time I had sold over a hundred stories and Lord knows how many comics scripts and short stories, I was still only that. I still have a lot to learn about how to write.

"Even though the five comics magazines that made up the Ace group came out bi-monthly, writing scripts for all of them was an almost overwhelming task. Each book was, I believe, fifty-four pages long. Take out two pages for the center spread, for which I

didn't have to write, thank God—they reprinted old pulp short shorts—and there were still fifty pages of script for each magazine. That came to a hundred and twenty-five pages of script per month. Plus the time taken away from that to interview artists and check out their work. I got the basic plots for the scripts from some of their old pulps, but this sometimes made it even more of a chore. Because of the different methods of story telling used in the pulps and the comics, it was frequently necessary for me to replot the old pulp yarns before I could use them for comics material. The pulps were a verbal and the comics a visual method of storytelling."

In a nutshell, Turner may be explaining why Aces' comics line never really took off. Recycling old pulp plots for the new medium was a certain recipe for tedium. In making this suggestion, he may have saved the Ace line from extinction during this highly competitive period in the comic book's evolution.

During his brief tenure as Ace's sole comics editor/writer, Turner wrote *Sure-Fire*'s main feature, Flash Lightning (later renamed Lash Lightning, probably because All-American's lawyers complained), *Super-Mystery*'s big star Magno, the Magnetic Man as well as The Raven, the Black Spider, Dr. Nemesis, Mr. Risk, Buckskin and countless others.

One of the series Turner probably converted from pulps to comics was X, the Phantom Fed. Although long unsuspected by comics and pulp fans alike, this was nothing less than Ace's 1930s pulp hero, Secret Agent X, under an assumed name; the stories taken straight from the pulp novels and compressed to a ridiculous length. X appeared in *Sure-Fire Comics*, starting with #1.

It was a grueling few months for Robert Turner, being a one-man comic book factory.

"It seems, looking back on that job, that I did nothing for eight hours every day but hastily read old pulp stories and pound the typewriter like someone gone mad. It wasn't really that way, of course. Actually, breaking it down to twenty working days a month, I only had to turn out an average of six pages of script a day. Between checking out artists when they brought in their work, interviewing new ones, correcting proofs, and other tasks, though, I did have to work pretty fast to get those six pages in."

In the white heat of production, somehow *Sure-Fire Comics* #4 was misnumbered #3, leading to the collector's nightmare of two unsuspected #3s until the truth was figured out.

Meanwhile, Turner was still concentrating on his true goal, the pulps. At night, he took Ace pulps home and studied them carefully. Sometime in late 1940, Turner finally sold his first pulp story, "Death's Stand-In," to Ace's *Ten Detective Aces*. It appeared in the December 1940 issue. One pulp sale led to another, and Turner realized he had to make his move into pulp.

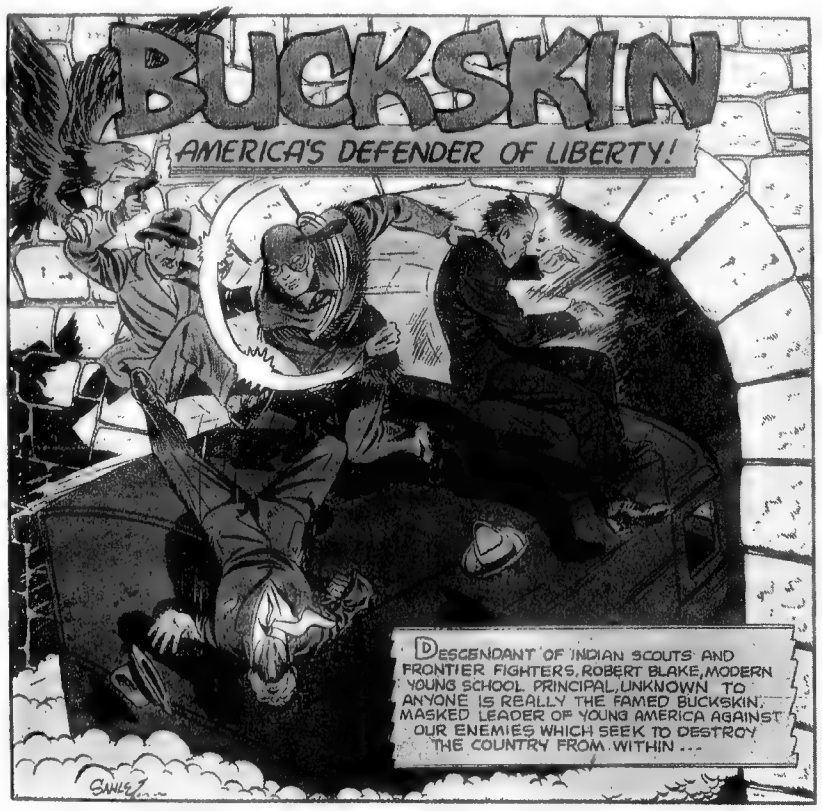
"Shortly after that," he wrote, *"I realized I had to get out of the full-time job and either make it or break it at home with my typewriter. Still, I tried to hedge. I asked for a ten dollar a week raise, and put the request in such a way that there was no choice for them but to give it to me or lose me for the job. They chose the latter.*

"The day that I left I talked to Fred Gardener, and he asked me if I knew anybody who would be a good replacement. I told him no, and then proceeded to blurt out that I thought their system was all wrong, anyhow, that their old pulp magazines weren't really supplying the right kind of stories for the comics. I suggested that they might be better off buying free-lance stuff from writers who specialized in that kind of material.

"Later I was surprised when this gambit paid off. They took my advice, and I then proceeded to sell them a considerable amount of my own material on a per page basis."

Thus, even after leaving Ace, Turner remained a significant contributor to their growing comics line, and poor Fred Gardener went back to editing the line himself. No doubt Turner was motivated to pen those two *Writer's Digest* articles to help out Gardener, who was frequently placing desperate notices in that magazine, seeking writers to fill his pages. Turner obviously wouldn't, and couldn't, do it all.

Turner's tenure at Ace is impossible to determine absolutely, but it seems from his comments that he left the company in the latter months of 1940. Given the passage of


BUCKSKIN
AMERICA'S DEFENDER OF LIBERTY!
DESCENDANT OF INDIAN SCOUTS AND FRONTIER FIGHTERS, ROBERT BLAKE, MODERN YOUNG SCHOOL PRINCIPAL, UNKNOWN TO ANYONE IS REALLY THE FAMED BUCKSKIN, MASKED LEADER OF YOUNG AMERICA AGAINST OUR ENEMIES WHICH SEEK TO DESTROY THE COUNTRY FROM WITHIN ...

Another Turner creation at Ace was Buckskin, sporting blue fringe and red feather; he was outdone only by Holyoke's Captain Fearless who topped his leather togs with a coonskin cap

time and the vagaries of human memory, early 1941 can't be ruled out, either.

Turner evidently remained Ace's star writer for a time. When Gardener launched *Our Flag*, it starred three of Turner's Captain America copies; Unknown Soldier, Captain Victory and The Flag. His Lone Warrior was launched in *Banner Comics* #1. *Four Favorites* featured many characters written by Turner for this and other Ace titles, including Vulcan, another Human Torch clone.

Although he was selling regularly to *Ten Detective Aces* and *Ten Story Detective*, Robert Turner found he had to keep his nose pressed firmly to the four-color grindstone to make a living. And grind he did.

"This required writing script after script, and short short stories until I began to feel like a human typing machine," he complained. *"One of the few highlights was working with young comics magazine artist, Jim Mooney, who was—and still is—one of the best in the business. Between us we created some new series, one of which was called 'Wildfire,' which sold to* Smash Comics."

Wildfire debuted in Quality's *Smash* #25. He also did cabby Hack O'Hara for *Crack* and bandleader Swing Sisson for *Feature*. Turner was busy expanding his markets to keep pace with the burgeoning field. At Parents' Magazine Press, he scripted *Real Heroes*. For Fox, he was also doing Blue Beetle, Captain Kidd, Chen Chang, Voodoo Man, Lt. Drake and Yank Wilson for *Mystery-Men*, *Weird* and other titles. For *Prize*, he originated K the Unknown, who became the Black Owl, writing the character in both incarnations. Over at MLJ, he was responsible for Steel Sterling, Mr. Satan, The Rocket and the Queen of Diamonds and yet another patriotic hero, Captain Flag, for *Blue Ribbon*, *Pep* and *Zip*. If Jack Kirby was the artist who drew the most red, white and blue characters over his long career, Robert Turner was the man who held the equivalent scripting record!

Turner also worked for Pines, but the specific features remain unknown. Turner's work in Centaur's *C-M-O Comics* is mostly a mystery. C-M-O stood for Chicago Mail Order, but Centaur was the real publisher of this early promotional title featuring Invisible Terror, Super Ann and Plymo, the Rubber Man. One of Centaur's last titles, this was where the infamous Star-Spangled Branner appeared.

His comics credits continued piling up, yet big money continued to elude him, so Turner tried the syndicate route once again, this time with new partner, Jim Mooney.

"Jim and I also worked out what we thought was a sensational idea for a syndicated comic strip, which we were sure would make us both rich. It involved the adventures of a black jazz musician, a trumpet player, as he traveled about the country with various serious Dixieland jazz outfits—including some of the prejudice problems he encountered. We did it straight, no Amos and Andy stuff. It would be the adventures of a man, and his race was incidental. It would have involved various aspects of the music business: crooked booking agents, being stranded in various cities, and the like."

This character sounds like a reformulation of Turner's Quality Comics swing time bandleader, Swing Sisson.

"Apparently we were little ahead of our time," he lamented. *"Several of the big syndicates nibbled at the eight-week daily sample we submitted, but that was about all. One even asked us why we hadn't done it with a white musician? Why, indeed? There wasn't any real reason, except that wasn't the way in which we conceived it.*

"Shortly after that, Jim and I lost track of each other until nearly twenty years later when by a freak coincidence we ran into each other in Hollywood. At that time he was doing the artwork for Supergirl and some other features."

With Pearl Harbor, the draft sucked all available men into the various branches of the military, and there was a sudden scarcity of writers in the better-paying pulp field. Turner found himself in high demand. Then, the bottom fell out.

As Turner told *Writer's Digest* in August 1942:

"Late last fall you published my series of articles on writing for the comic magazines. As a result of that I fell heir to a lot of swell extra work that I would otherwise not even have dreamed of. I was assigned to adapt a classic adventure novel for use as a newspaper comic Sunday supplement; orders from comic houses with which I had never done business before flowed in—and so on.

"I managed to take care of all that work and keep up with my regular assignments. And then a strange thing happened. I went completely dead on writing comic stuff. I lost all interest in that form of writing. It took me a week to turn out a strip that should ordinarily take but a day. Since writing is my only livelihood and I have a family to look after, that was bad, very bad.

"After three years of lush living off of one literary pasture, I had to find another, a new one, but quickly."

Turner decided to focus on pulp detective writing, where he had already made a few sales.

"I had a very tough first three months," he admitted. *"Some writers and some editors told me that I was crazy, that I could not make the change over from comics to pulps so suddenly. I would, they prophesied, starve to death before I could make the requisite changes in style, approach, thought processes, etc. They advised that I should stick to the comics a little longer, even to only make a bare living out of them. But this I could not do."*

Turner's instincts proved correct. He began selling to Popular Publications' detective pulps, did a brief stint there as an editor and rewrite man on *The Spider* and other titles, and so put comic books completely behind him.

This lasted until about 1948-49. The pulps started a steep decline after the war. They still sold, but there were fewer of them, and new ones were not being added. Writers began jumping ship. To radio. To Hollywood. To the new paperback field. Even to the infant TV industry.

"Not me," recounted Turner. *"I thought the pulps would recover. Meanwhile, I went back to writing for the comic maga-*

zines, which were now in a new boom concentrating on horror, crime, and war stories. And the rates had gone up since I last worked for them, which meant that you now got from seven to ten dollars per comic book page. Most of the stories ran seven or eight pages. If you could do two or three a week, you could make a fair living. I was able to do that and had time left over to continue writing short stories. Oh yes, the little center spread short short stories that the comics had to use had now gone up in rates from five dollars to twenty-five. This helped, too.

"From late 1950 to 1952, I turned out reams of scripts for the horror-type comics with such uplifting titles as 'Lair of the Linxmen,' 'The Frightful Faces,' 'Diogenes' Deadly Lamp,' 'Menace of the Master Brain,' 'Wedded to a Witch,' 'The Carpenter's Cursed Creature,' 'The Fanged Nemesis of the North,' and other similar goodies. Crime comics titles were little less juicy. A couple of them were 'Born to Burn,' 'Beast of the Border,' and 'Homicidal Hitchhiker.'

"I also refought World War II in the comics with such heroic titles as 'Decision on Devil's Range,' 'Operation Abracadabra' and others. In fact, in 1952, for the benefit of comics magazine readers, I even arranged for World War III. I wrote two complete issues of a magazine called World War III Comics, thirty pages in each, for five hundred dollars. Right now I don't recall whether this magazine was ever published or if it died aborning. I have a vague memory that it did come out, though, at least for one issue."

In fact, two issues of *World War III* were released by Ace in 1953. Turner continued to write unspecified crime, war and horror scripts for Ace as late as 1956. During his last hurrah in comic books, the 1948-56 period, Turner also contributed to Timely's *Girl Comics*, as well as scripting the adventures of Davy Crockett, John Paul Jones and Lewis and Clark for Dell. ACG was a client, too.

"Most of this stuff was written for my old friend Fred Gardener at Ace, and for Joe Archibald, who used to appear in the same pulps with me and was then comics magazine editor at Standard Magazines," Turner continued. *"Some of it went to the Ziff-Davis group. I was lucky to be able to survive the demise of pulps because of my earlier experience at writing comics scripts."*

Surviving the pulps may have prepared Turner for a similar experience: surviving the post-war comic book implosion. He was still scripting away for various companies when comics hit the twin brick walls of post-war boredom with the form and public censorship.

"Then there were the 'true crime' and gangster comics for a brief era," Turner remembered. *"After that there was a long horror and supernatural trend, which just about ended the whole thing when the publishers let their artists and writers get a little too gruesome and sadistic, and parent groups and censors began stepping in and throwing their weight around. When the publishers succumbed to this pressure and watered down the stuff, the kids, of course, lost interest and stopped buying the things."*

They stopped buying from Robert Turner too, and he moved on to writing mysteries for Ace Books and later TV shows like *Alfred Hitchcock*, *Suspense*, *Tombstone Territory* and *Shotgun Slade*. Except for his autobiography, he never looked back or retained much nostalgia for his comics scripting days.

But Turner, like his comics contemporary Mickey Spillane, and others who went on to better things, did truly appreciate the time he did hack away in the four-color forest.

"Okay, okay, already, someone is screaming, so you wrote for the comic magazines," Turner remarked in *Some of my Best Friends are Writers, but.... "Big deal! Well, for me it was. For one thing, the training in visual writing, rough as it was, helped me a great deal in breaking into television years later. The comics were also the instrument by which I finally escaped from my then loathsome job."*

But most of all, the comics of the four-color forest enabled Robert Turner to penetrate his ultimate goal, the fabled Pulp Jungle.

MAGNO
THE MAGNETIC MAN
THE CLOWN COMES BACK AGAIN TO BATTLE MAGNO, MASTER OF MAGNETISM, AND HIS PAL, DAVEY, IN ANOTHER SMASHING ADVENTURE!
JIM MOONEY
IT IS THE CLOWN!
AND THEY WILL SOON FIND OUT, MUCH TO THEIR HORROR!
BUT WHILE MAGNO AND DAVEY ARE TAKING THINGS EASY, A SINISTER FIGURE TOILS IN AN UNDERGROUND LABORATORY BENEATH A LONELY CEMETERY
WAIT TILL MAGNO AND DAVEY LEARN THAT I AM NOT DEAD, THAT I CAME OUT OF THAT FALL FROM THE LIGHTHOUSE WITH BUT A FEW BRUISES. HEH..HEH!
NOW THAT THE CLOWN IS DEAD AND GONE, DAVEY, WE CAN TAKE TIME OUT FOR A LITTLE FUN
YOU SAID IT! I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS CIRCUS

Magno was the star of **Super-Mystery Comics**, and this handsome splash page is the work of the "Ace" team of Robert Turner and Jim Mooney

Bud Fisher: Patron Saint of Cartoonists?

A "farrago," in case you weren't watching the last time one flew by, is merely a "medley" or "conglomeration." A mixture. And that's what we have here—a mixture of fact and opinion, history and observation, about the newspaper comic strip, mostly, with occasional excursions into other realms, admittedly, but mostly strips and the lore of strip cartooning. Take, for example, Bud Fisher.

Harry Conway "Bud" Fisher created *Mutt and Jeff*. But he did more than that. He did enough, in fact, that John Wheeler put him on a pedestal, a short pedestal but a sturdy one. Wheeler was a pioneering newspaper entrepreneur who set up a syndicate and then wooed Fisher away from William Randolph Hearst. About Fisher, Wheeler wrote: "By his guts and independence, [he] probably did more to make the cartoon business for his more cowardly confreres than anyone else who has ever been in it."

To begin with, Fisher had the foresight to copyright his comic strip in his own name—and, later, to apply for a trademark on the title. The strip was his and no one else's. And Fisher fought in court to establish his ownership beyond question.

Fisher began to benefit from his prescience almost at once. Press baron Hearst, seeing that Fisher's creation (then entitled *A. Mutt*) seemed responsible for his San Francisco competition's increase in circulation, did what he would do again and again over the next half century: he hired the rival's talent away by paying more. Much more. Hearst offered a weekly salary of $45, double Fisher's pay at the rival *Chronicle*; and *A. Mutt* began running in Hearst's *San Francisco Examiner* just three weeks after its debut in the other paper on November 15, 1907.

It also continued to run in the *Chronicle*. In accordance with established practice, *A. Mutt* was treated as if it were the *Chronicle*'s property: the editors simply hired another cartoonist (Russ Westover, later the creator of *Tillie the Toiler*) to draw the strip. But this time, the situation was different. The canny Fisher had taken the precaution of copyrighting the strip in his name with its last appearance in the *Chronicle*.

Waiting until after his editor approved that day's strip, Fisher went into the engraving room and, before the plate was made, wrote "Copyright 1907, H.C. Fisher" in the corner of the last panel and subsequently registered the copyright in Washington. So when the *Chronicle* continued the strip after Fisher left, he threatened to sue. The paper, convinced of the legitimacy of his copyright holding, stopped running the ersatz *A. Mutt* as of June 7, 1908.

Later, Fisher took legal action again for his rights to the strip, and this time, the case went to court and established a legal precedent.

In 1913, Wheeler came on the scene. He offered Fisher a better syndication deal than Hearst was giving him. By then, Hearst was paying Fisher $300 a week; Wheeler offered the cartoonist $1,000 a week or 60 percent of the revenue, whichever was greater. It was a staggering sum, and once persuaded that Wheeler had the financial resources to actually pay the weekly guarantee, Fisher left Hearst. Hearst hired another cartoonist (either Ed Mack or Billy Liverpool, sources differ) to draw *A. Mutt*. And Fisher sued—this time prosecuting the issue to a final legal resolution: the strip and its characters belonged to Fisher not to Hearst or his paper. (After winning his case, Fisher hired Ed Mack as his assistant, and Mack drew the strip until he died in about 1932. Mack's assistant, Al Smith, inherited the job and drew the strip until he retired, long after Fisher's death.)

Fisher's fights for his rights as a cartoonist were not confined to the courtroom. And the fighting began early.

In *Comic Art in America*, Stephen Becker tells us that while Fisher was still a staff cartoonist for the *Chronicle*, the paper reduced the size allotted to his sports page cartoon without informing him. Fisher calmly tore up his artwork and refused to draw for the smaller size. In effect, he quit.

But since he was obliged to give two weeks' notice, he came to the office every day for the next week or so. He did not, however, touch pen or paper. After several days of this, his editor relented, and Fisher's cartoon resumed at its usual dimension.

Fisher was perfectly constituted for doing battle. According to Rube Goldberg and others who knew him well, Fisher was an inlet of self-assured independence in a churning sea of whimpering egos. He was antagonistic and belligerent—a cocky, scrappy, dapper, hard-drinking, carousing denizen of city rooms and saloons. His was the sort of personality that generates legends.

Apart from the legends, there are the facts.

Some of the facts are sometimes disputed. Credited with creating the first daily comic feature in strip form, Fisher is the beneficiary of what the venerable comics historian Coulton Waugh called "the Columbus Principle." The Vikings may have been the first Europeans to tread the beaches in the Western Hemisphere, but Christopher Columbus inspired others with his visit and thereby earned his niche in history. Ditto Fisher with the "strip" format that ran horizontally across the page and with the "daily" appearance.

He also pioneered day-to-day continuity. Augustus Mutt, a racetrack tout and habitual gambler, placed his bet one day, and readers didn't find out if he'd won or lost until the next day. And on that day, he'd place another bet.

Gambling is an adult diversion, an important point to realize. Mutt's gambling got him into trouble with his wife, and with the insinuation of domestic travail into the strip, it was clear (if it hadn't been before) that Fisher was aiming for adult readers, not children. He wasn't the first to do that either, but his success with the maneuver serves to remind us that the funnies weren't exclusively kiddie literature, even from the start. (Neither were comic books, but that's another story for another time.)

Fisher was also an early explorer of the potential of the daily comic strip for sustained political satire. Before his strip was four months old, he was flinging barbs at local politicians in San Francisco. Because his targets were known only in that city, Fisher abandoned this practice once the strip was being distributed widely. But he had demonstrated the potential with panache.

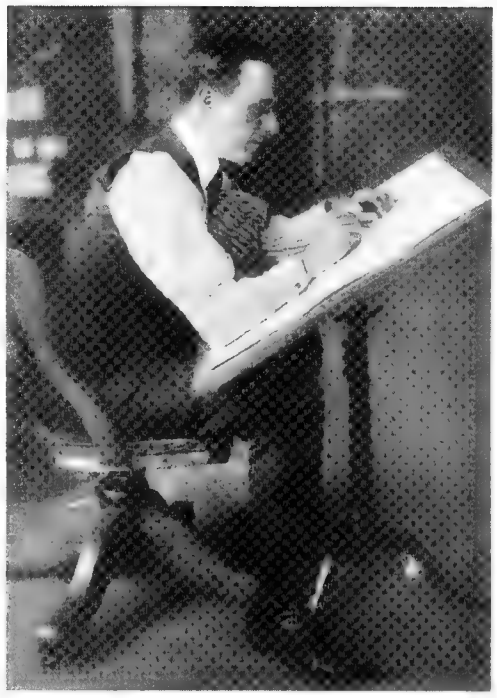
In March 1908, Fisher brought the diminutive Jeff into the strip, and with that, the cartoonist entered the pantheon of American popular culture icons. "Mutt and Jeff" attest to the visual power of the comic strip. In common parlance, the names (seemingly forever linked) always denote a visually mismatched pair, a tall person and a short one.

Fisher's comedy team did not become yoked in the strip's title until about the time he joined Wheeler, and by

HORRORS !!!
CURSES! I THOUGHT I'D LOST THAT GUY
FISHER
WELL, IF IT AINT MY OLD PAL, BRANY MITT ME !!
I HAD TO PAY FOR EVERYTHING
I BET THIS MARSHALL FIELD SKY PIECE KNOCKS 'EM STIFF WHEN I BREEZE UP VAN NESS
OH YOU, SOOTER STREET !
I'LL STAKE 'EM TO BROADWAY. OLD RUE DE FILLMORE WILL DO FOR MINE

In this strip from mid-June 1908 (the strip is only 8 months old), Fisher concludes a "walking tour around the world" that he took his cast on. On the far left are his caricatures of various San Francisco poobahs whom he had ridiculed in a trial sequence early in the year, their names lost in antiquity. At the right, starting in front of the group with Mutt, we have Fisher in self-caricature, Jeff, little Cicero (Mutt's son), Mrs. Mutt, and "General Delivery," Jeff's crazy friend from "the bughouse" (lunatic asylum where Mutt was sentenced after his trial in the hopes he'd be cured of his compulsive gambling), accompanied by his parrot, Baby Jack (probably another local reference)

then, the soaring popularity of *Mutt and Jeff* was on its way to making Fisher rich beyond his wildest dreams. By 1916, popular magazine articles were reporting that he earned $150,000 a year. Five years later, *Mutt and Jeff* animated cartoons and merchandising as well as the constantly growing circulation of the strip had increased his annual income to about $250,000. Fisher was without a doubt the profession's richest practitioner. He was also famous. And he quickly habituated himself to enjoying both wealth and renown.



This photograph of Fisher ran in **The American Magazine** in 1916.

His celebrity made him welcome in circles that were normally closed to newspapermen and other lowlifes (such as actors and professional athletes, all of who were social outcasts for at least the first twenty years of the century). The first truly famous cartoonist, Fisher relished his position in high society, and he worked hard on his public image (tainting the world's perception of cartoonists in the process). Fisher bought a stable of racehorses, drove about town in a Rolls Royce, and prowled nightclubs with a beautiful showgirl on each arm.

By the twenties, Fisher was enjoying his social life so much that he left most of the work on the strip to Ed Mack. In this respect, too, Fisher may have set the mold. For a long time, the average newspaper reader, who acquired his perception of the world from what he read in his paper, believed that the famous cartoonists whose escapades were so frequently related on the front pages spent most of their time lolling around in fancy nightclubs while their strips were being drawn by underpaid starving teenagers, who slaved away in secrecy in some obscure garret. In Fisher's case, this perception was probably close to the truth. (As it was with another Fisher, Ham, whose Joe Palooka was drawn by others even if it was written by its creator of record.)

"Bud" Fisher drew for us this picture of himself and his famous characters "Mutt and Jeff," out of which he makes $150,000 a year

Fisher's self-caricature being reprimanded by his characters in a drawing made especially for **The American Magazine** in 1916

Bud Fisher became a gambling, womanizing sun-dodger, who seldom handled a pen anymore. And the more he moved in society's salons, the less use he had for his erstwhile brethren of the inky-fingered fraternity. He regularly snubbed his one-time friends. "He squandered his life and was a very unhappy man," Wheeler wrote in his memoir, *I've Got News for You*.

Fisher died in 1954 at the age of 70. His last years were desolate and lonely. He was sick and solitary in a huge museum of a Park Avenue apartment. Fisher had purchased rooms from historic European houses and had them dismantled and installed in his apartment. There was an English manor room of the Elizabethan period and a French Provincial room. Another room was Oriental, a trove of Chinese treasures.

Towards the end, he seldom left his bedroom where he slept on a bare mattress and pillows without cases, while the rest of his abode slipped into shabby decay; its hallways lined with stacks of unopened envelopes from his bank. He had few visitors: his treatment of his fellow cartoonists had been so high-handed for so long that none except Rube Goldberg and Bob Dunn would have anything to do with the man who had established the format of the medium in which they worked.

Occasionally young aspiring cartoonists would visit, and Fisher, desperate for company, would keep them entertained for hours with stories of his travels in European society and his dockside welcoming parties. Like Miss Havisham, Fisher died amid the faded remnants of a once opulent life style, as cartooning's first millionaire.

Despite this dreary finale to his life story, Fisher's career vividly demonstrates the importance to a cartoonist of owning his own creation. But this was scarcely a carefully guarded secret, even in the early days of cartooning—as we'll see next time we meet here to consider the question: Why the heck didn't every cartoonist copyright his work?

EC Artwork Auctions

The Unique History of the Auctioning of the Original Art, and How One Man Beat the Odds to Build His Collection

By Terry Doyle

The first EC comic books I ever discovered were the East Coast Comix "EC Classic Reprints" series of 12 assorted books (Crime, Horror, Shock, War and Science-Fiction), produced by Ron Barlow and Bruce Hershenson between 1973 and 1975. This would be around early 1978, not long after my de-mob from the British Army, at a time when I was rekindling my love of the American comic books I had avidly collected as a youngster growing up in Liverpool. I was always a fan of the 1960s Marvel titles during my childhood, but as an adult re-exploring the world of comics, I came across issues of the Barlow/Hershenson EC reprints whilst visiting a shop specializing in vintage comic material—and was immediately attracted by their intrigue-orientated covers.

Of the handful of sample issues I initially bought, one of the first EC comics I chose to read was the reprint edition of *Weird Fantasy* #13 (originally published June 1952). The opening eight-page story, entitled "The End!," was illustrated by Wally Wood—an artist whose work I fondly remembered from the early Marvel editions of Daredevil. But as much as I had loved those Marvel stories, I couldn't help but be amazed by the standards of this earlier EC work by Wood which far surpassed anything I remember from the 1960s Superhero titles!

"The End!" concerned a radioactive comet rapidly approaching the Earth of 1952, with the threat of planetary destruction. The comet eventually burns itself out, but not before wreaking havoc and destruction in its wake and leaving a side effect of its radioactivity: mankind is rendered sterile, incapable of reproducing. Years pass and man's only hope of salvation from total extinction is to invent and build a time machine—capable of scooping up young people from the past (pre-comet days), in an effort to repopulate the Earth of the future…

As with all of the Feldstein-edited titles, "The End!" featured a terrific twist-in-the-tail ending (apparently based upon a Damon Knight story entitled "Not With a Bang"). Wood's artwork, depicting (then) contemporary America right through to the (imagined) future, is truly wonderful to behold—filled with the most intricate of detail and superb use of chiaroscuro!

I was rapidly becoming hooked on EC, and once the dozen East Coast reprints had been bought and savored, I then needed to seek out original editions to feed my addiction. Not an easy task for decades-old American comic books, unlikely to have been distributed in England!

Attending various Comics Marts around the country yielded some good results, but whenever ECs turned up on offer from dealers, they were invariably commanding high prices.

One of my luckiest breaks came whilst attending a Liverpool Comic Mart in 1979, where I noticed an attendee attempting to sell a copy of *MAD* #2 to a dealer. As could be expected, the dealer was trying to sound disinterested, in an effort to scale-down the asking price, but I just stepped in and said I would be very interested in buying the comic there and then at the requested amount. As it happened, the guy had more EC comics at home, and I indicated my willingness to buy others, providing the asking prices remained reasonable—much to the displeasure of the dealer whose nose had been truly pushed out!

It was a mutually-good chance meeting; I got to buy something like 70 ECs over a period of about six months at fair asking price—and the other guy did better for himself than going the sell-to-a-dealer route.

Several months later, at another Mart, I spotted a slip-cased set of the complete *Weird Science* on offer at a dealer's table. The (then) asking price was £36, which I had no hesitation in paying. Upon arriving at home and inspecting the beautifully-produced hardback reprint edition, I immediately noticed that the story artwork was presented in black and white—shot directly from the original artwork—and the clarity of those marvelous illustrations far exceeded anything represented in the original comic books, where fine-line work tended to be obscured by the cheap and clumsy printing processes involved. To keep costs at an acceptable level, the publisher of the hardback reprints, Russ Cochran, had elected to reproduce the story art in

black and white (as originally drawn), with all cover pages in full color.

I'd previously seen the *EC Library* series advertised in an edition of *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*, but was initially a bit wary of the hassle involved with overseas transactions. Cochran was planning to reprint the entire line of EC comics in durable hardback format (five or six comics per volume), and I figured such a venture worthy of my support, so I sent off for details and consequently subscribed to the entire series—to buy directly from the publisher and not the middle-man; send my money where it was needed most.

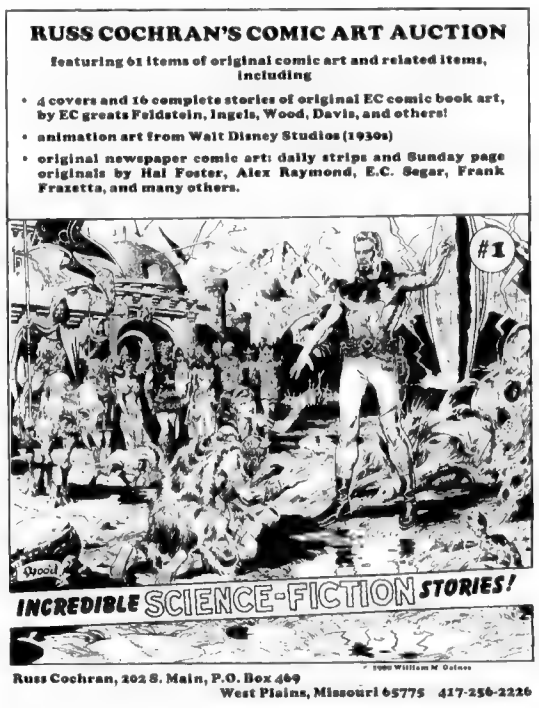
As a customer, I periodically received mail shots from Russ Cochran Publisher of the various books and merchandise on offer. One EC-related newsletter detailed the auctioning-off of the EC original artwork which would gradually be released as each comic book title made it to hardback set. Back in the 1950s, EC's publisher, Bill Gaines, had been wise enough to save up all the original drawings used for his line of comic books and magazines. With the realization of Cochran's project—which would preserve all the work in (durable) Library format—Gaines decided the time was right to let go of the art.

Initially, the first batch of "New Trend" EC artwork was offered via a newsletter, but Cochran then switched over to auction catalogs which would be subscriber-based and issued quarterly. For the most part, each *Comic Art Auction* would offer the covers and interior stories for four EC comic books per quarterly auction. As a general rule of thumb, covers and stories carried three different "minimum bids"—depending on the artist concerned. EC artists such as Jack Kamen and Joe Orlando had a minimum bid of $200 attached to their covers and (complete) stories; Al Feldstein, Johnny Craig, Jack Davis, George Evans, Reed Crandall, Harvey Kurtzman, John Severin and the Severin/Elder team came into the $400 category; with Wally Wood, Graham Ingels and Al Williamson artwork commencing at $800.

At the time, I was not a collector of original artwork, but the idea of owning some of the *actual* EC drawings somehow appealed to me—and I knew my collection of EC material would never quite satisfy me unless I had just one example of complete story artwork in my possession—to own a piece of history. Prior to embarking on the *Complete EC Library*, Cochran had published a series of oversized *EC Portfolios*, each showcasing choice EC material to original artwork standards of reproduction. This would also have nudged me towards collecting artwork.

In mid-1982 I finally sent off to Cochran for a four-issue subscription to his *Comic Art Auction* catalogs. I figured that even if I could come away with just one of the lower-end items—maybe a Jack Kamen story in the $200 price range—I would be happy.

My first catalog (#11) reached me late August 1982. Leafing through the pages, I viewed images of a Raymond


RUSS COCHRAN'S COMIC ART AUCTION
featuring 61 items of original comic art and related items, including
• 4 covers and 16 complete stories of original EC comic book art, by EC greats Feldstein, Ingels, Wood, Davis, and others!
• animation art from Walt Disney Studios (1930s)
• original newspaper comic art: daily strips and Sunday page originals by Hal Foster, Alex Raymond, E.C. Segar, Frank Frazetta, and many others.
#1
INCREDIBLE SCIENCE-FICTION STORIES!
Russ Cochran, 202 S. Main, P.O. Box 469
West Plains, Missouri 65775 417-256-2226

Flash Gordon Sunday, two Hal Foster *Prince Valiant* Sundays, a Frazetta painting and four complete EC comic books! All this and more!! The complete covers and interior stories for *Tales From the Crypt* #37, *Two-Fisted Tales* #24, *Weird Fantasy* #7 and *Shock SuspenStories* #4.

At the time I was in a decent-paying job and was single, so I calculated my spare finances and decided I could go a bit higher than a Kamen story after all. I was rather attracted to Al Feldstein's science-fiction artwork, so decided I could afford to bid up to $500 on his eight-page *Weird Fantasy* #7 lead story, "7 Year Old Genius." I submitted a mail bid to Cochran, which included some alternative choices (in the event I was out-bid on my first preference) and waited to hear the results.

The auction took place on Wednesday, September 15, 1982, and just over a week later I came home from work one evening to be greeted by an airmailed letter from America. Nervously I opened the envelope; the contents of which was an invoice. Not only had I secured an item of EC artwork in Cochran's auction, but I had also landed the winning bid on my first choice—the Feldstein eight-page Weird Fantasy story art! Final bid came in at $484, and on top of this was a reasonable charge for insured airmail delivery. Overjoyed, I popped out from work the very next day to obtain an International Money Order from my bank which was then airmailed off to Cochran. Then I sweated it out for several weeks.

When the artwork package finally arrived, I was really taken-aback by the size of the original drawings, which were much larger than the printed pages for which they had been produced. The image size of each page measured approximately 18"x13". It was magnificent to behold. As daft as it might sound, I actually spent several

hours carefully comparing each page of original art against the printed page—just to make sure I had not been sold forgeries! It seemed incredible that I was actually holding Feldstein's original drawings!!

Bearing in mind that subsequent EC artwork auctions would take place every three months, I began working more and more overtime at work—to build up funds for further purchases. Knowing that the entire EC line would appear in hardback format, I ceased looking for the old comic books, and switched my collecting habits towards the acquisition of original artwork. Throughout the remainder of the 1980s I participated regularly in Cochran's auctions, and built up a good collection of original EC artwork.

A particular highlight for me came on April 25, 1984, when Wally Wood's complete story artwork "The End!" (*Weird Fantasy* #13) came up for auction. I had been waiting for this one, and made sure I had sufficient funds to land the winning bid ($900 for the complete eight-pager)! Whilst this particular story might not rank amongst Wood's finest achievements, it had certainly left its mark on me, being one of the earliest EC stories to have really impressed me.

Towards the end of the 1980s, when my personal circumstances had changed (met a girl, got engaged, bought a house, etc.) it was no longer feasible to continue buying art, so my collecting habits were put on hold for a while. Luckily, I had achieved most of my goals on the EC front and I was more than content.

Arround 1990, Russ Cochran had completed selling all of the EC New Trend artwork. About that same time the New York-based auction houses, Sotheby's and Christie's started featuring comic book and newspaper strip artwork in their auctions—and prices were rapidly escalating.

In 1996 Russ Cochran resumed his comic art auctions (which had ceased in 1992) and offered a selection of EC "Pre-Trend" artwork that included the first two issues of *War Against Crime*. Interest in this earlier EC artwork was not as great as the high-demand New Trend titles, and it was possible to acquire, for example, complete Graham Ingels (pre-Horror) Crime, Western and Romance artwork at prices commencing at $400 opening bid.

As an interesting aside, I once read that Bill Gaines—who bought his artwork outright—would share his proceeds from the EC art auctions with the original artists. Something he was under no obligation to do!

In August 1998, I resumed my collecting of EC art—deciding I would like to have some Pre-Trend examples in my collection. I was fortunate enough to acquire an early Johnny Craig *Saddle Justice* cover and a nine-page Ingels Western story from *Gunfighter*.

Outside of Cochran's art auctions, I was extremely lucky in being able to acquire, in trade from an American collector, the cover art to *Haunt of Fear* #13 by Graham Ingels! This was a dream come true for me as, during the 1980s when participating in Cochran's art auctions, Ingels *HOF* cover art always commanded high bids, outside of my price range!! Another trade netted me Johnny Craig's cover art to *War Against Crime* #5.

During the summer of 1999, thanks to the wonders of modern technology, I was able to establish on-line contact with another American collector interested in trading artwork with me. On offer from him was the cover art to *Vault of Horror* #33 by Johnny Craig, along with the accompanying Jack Davis story that tied in to the cover image. This particular cover, showing a group of children staging a funeral procession, was something I'd always liked, but had been unable to bid on when Cochran originally auctioned off the art due to his catalog reaching me *after* the auction date! It was another amazing piece of luck for me!!

Over the years I have sold or traded examples of EC artwork (especially where I possessed multiple story examples by one particular artist, for example), but at this time of writing I still retain a total of five covers and fifteen complete stories, representing the works of Al Feldstein, Johnny Craig, Harvey Kurtzman, George Evans, John Severin, Joe Orlando, Severin/Elder, Graham Ingels, Jack Davis, Bernie Krigstein and Wally Wood.

Ironically, I never did manage to land a Jack Kamen story! Interestingly, Kamen artwork is now extremely difficult to acquire. Jack's son, a wealthy businessman, has been buying up as much of dad's artwork as he can—and in an auction situation is near-impossible to beat!

One disappointing practice I have noticed over the years, is to see EC story artwork split up and sold as individual pages. Presumably, this has been done by collectors or dealers—in an effort to maximize profit margins? It saddens me to see this happen.

Prices on those pieces of EC artwork re-entering the market continue to escalate, and the prices involved can be quite staggering. Thankfully, I was around at the time when the artwork was affordable and in plentiful supply, and a big debt of gratitude is owed to the two men who made all this possible: Russ Cochran and the late Bill Gaines.

The Deal of the Art

by Chris Boyko

Welcome to the first in a series of columns reporting on the comic art market and commenting on developing trends in the field. Some of you may be wondering why such a column is necessary. After all, there are a number of recent books available containing listings on most major comic book and strip artists along with estimates on current market values, such as Jerry Weist's second edition of *The Comic Art Price Guide* and Jeffrey Ellinport's *Collecting Original Comic Strip Art*! Well, I can address such queries with one word: INTERNET (note the capital letters denoting importance). Of course, the number one Internet influence on the comic art market is eBay, which I'll talk more about later, but most other major sources for comic art, such as the auction houses, have turned to the Internet to spread the word and boost prices (which is, in effect, what posting an item on the Internet accomplishes!). And with the Internet comes speed, specifically a high-speed turnaround in comic art and a high-speed escalation in price for key (and sometimes not-so-key) pieces. A little background history, then, on how we seem to have gotten to where we are today: a world where the sky is the limit, as long as there are just two people with computers in the world who want some particular piece of art badly enough!

In the "good old days," the comic art market was pretty much restricted to conventions and private deals between collectors. Of course, this was back in the dim past, when the majority of comic art, at least the comic book art, was still locked up in the hands of the publishers. Bill Gaines still sat on his Vault of EC art; Marvel still declined (er—refused) to give back any art to the artists who made it, and DC apparently made really impressive paper airplanes out of their artwork rather than let it leave the office (I am joking! But an enormous amount of DC art did get unceremoniously tossed out, which is still reflected in the heavily Marvel-skewed 1960s and 70s art seen on eBay today and

Illustrations courtesy of the author

a corresponding much smaller smattering of DC pieces). Some comic book art did get into the market place, but these items were few and far between. Actually, there is no real evidence that, had all the market been chock-full of original art, it would have shown much demand and associated high prices. Those were the days of comic book stockpiling, especially Silver Age books, and most collectors never seemed too interested in anything beyond the books themselves. There were, of course, a few (myself not included, sadly) who were ahead of their time and appreciated original comic art early on.

The comic strip art market was similar to that of comic book art in some ways and yet very different in others. The striking similarity was in the lack of general interest in the available items (excepting certain top-of-the-line strips like *Prince Valiant* and *Flash Gordon*, which still sold for minute fractions of what they command in today's market). For the most part, the market was not well developed for the "average" piece of comic strip artwork. The big difference was that there was a lot of comic strip art to be had, if any interest surfaced. Many of the creators of the strips had their art returned to them by the syndicates to dispose of as they saw fit. And dispose of it they did, some more drastically than others; e.g., Dick Calkins, who is rumored to have set an enormous pile of *Buck Rogers* strips alight in his barn, rather than move them to a new location. But most strip artists tended to behave more rationally and would gladly give away their strips to fans who wrote them. This is no doubt the reason why most *Peanuts* strips on the market today are inscribed by Charles Schulz; his generosity was so extreme that his family today has very few early Peanuts strips in their collection. One side-effect of sending strips to fans was that some artists, most notoriously Hal Foster, cut out single panels rather than ship whole enormous

Wolverine first joins the X-Men on page 8 of **Giant-Sized X-Men** #1 (1975), and Dave Cockrum art suddenly becomes worth a lot more as it sells for $7908.01 on eBay in May 2001

Prince Valiant Sunday pages; the pain of this is still felt keenly today by Foster collectors. Of course, some more modern artists such as Bill Watterson (*Calvin and Hobbs*), Gary Larson (*Far Side*), Patrick McDonnell (*Mutts*), and Lynn Johnston (*For Better or For Worse*) are notoriously reticent to part with any of their original artwork, except for charitable causes in the case of the latter two.

Comic book art did not really begin to approach the levels of availability that strip art had until after the historic 1984 return of art by Marvel to their artists; a move spearheaded and championed by the late, great, Jack "King" Kirby. Many of the artists then sold the art to dealers and from there it moved onto the convention floors of America. Some of the artists were (smart? lucky?) fortunate enough to hold onto their artwork until recently and now make a brisk business selling directly to collectors via the Internet (both Dave Cockrum and Jim Mooney come to mind). But, even after the influx of large amounts of comic book art into the marketplace, there were plenty of pieces to be had for very little money ($5, $10, $20 a page was not uncommon). Only the "greats" (e.g., Kirby and Ditko) and certain "hot" artists (e.g., Byrne and Perez) could command the higher-end prices.

The true explosion of prices in the comic art market dates from the inception of the BIG auctions: Sotheby's and Christie's. Although there were many smaller auctions that predated these, such as the sales of Russ Cochran, Howard Lowry and others, it was really Sotheby's entry into the field in 1991 that seemed to get the ball rolling. This effect is quite similar to the one seen in the movie poster field, where prices did not explode until after the big auction houses started setting new records for sales and dealers began adjusting their prices to be in line with those realized by the auction houses. However, this price jump in the comic art market seems to have been even more extreme than in the poster realm, probably because each piece of comic art is, unlike (most) posters, unique.

But the auction house scene was not built to last. Both Sotheby's and Christie's shut down their live auctions of comic book material after a time, probably because the total take from the best comic auction in the world still brings in far less than a single low-end impressionist painting. Christie's packed it in after the 1997 auction, while Sotheby's continued until 2000. Today, Sotheby's still has comic art for sale, but only on their website, and Christie's has given it up for good. Some other live auctions of comic art still take place, but they are much smaller and occur less often. Greg Manning Auctions usually has some art items in their catalogs, but most of their offerings are pedigree comic books. All-Star Auctions still offers quite a bit of original art, but most of their sales seem to have migrated onto eBay and they must now be considered under that umbrella. The most recent live auction, that of primarily strip and animation art by Guernsey's in May of 2001, did not, for reasons still unclear, generate a great deal of interest or sales (despite a live Internet component) and I mention it here only to point out that the results from that sale should not be seen as indicative of values in the market today for comparable items (ah, but what bargains there were to be had for the lucky few in attendance!).

And so we come to the Internet. Of course, the prime mover of comic art on the Internet is the Godzilla (Gojira if you are a purist) of on-line auctions: eBay. The beauty, and perhaps the curse, of eBay is that it has allowed sellers and buyers to come together on a scale heretofore unimagined. And, on top of that, it allows sellers to hype their wares directly at that buyer who feels that he/she positively MUST have that item or else die. How else can one explain recent incredible prices such as: $7908 for a Dave Cockrum *Giant-Sized X-Men* #1 page, $800 for a *Barney Baxter* 1944 Sunday, $12,100 for a 1966 *Peanuts* daily, or two pages from a Frank Miller *Daredevil* #168 (1st Elektra) selling for a whopping $9995? These prices are approximately 2x, 7x, and 8x "guide" for the latter three examples; who knows how many times "guide" the Cockrum page sold for, as Cockrum is not listed in the guides! It's enough to make you "Ack!" like *Bloom County*'s Bill the Cat.

I recently started tracking all of the comic art posted on eBay, and will report on some of the more spectacular sales, as well as spectacular failures, in upcoming columns. It can be quite a chore wading through all the junk that is posted under original comic art, including posters, comics and the occasional Bicentennial salt shaker (how can you be THAT far off in choosing a category for your item??).

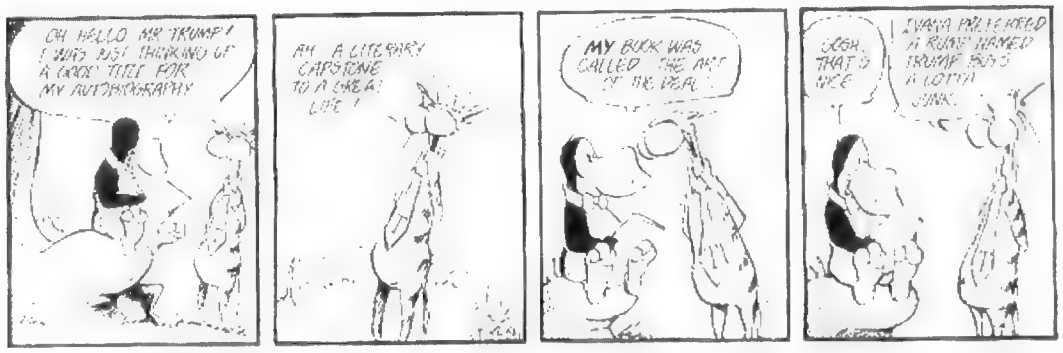
PEANUTS
HERE'S THE WORLD WAR I PILOT DOWN BEHIND ENEMY LINES...
WHAT'S THE CHAIN FOR, CHARLIE BROWN?
I HAVE TO CATCH SNOOPY, AND TAKE HIM TO THE VET'S FOR A SHOT...
SLOWLY I SNEAK FORWARD..ENEMY SOLDIERS ARE ALL AROUND ME...BUT THEY'LL NEVER TAKE ME ALIVE...I SHALL NEVER SURRENDER...I SHALL..
COMRADE!!
8-16
SCHULZ

This great Charles Schulz **Peanuts** daily from 1966, with Charlie Brown, Linus, and Snoopy in full World War I flying ace mode, sold for $12,100 on eBay in May 2001

THE DEAL OF THE ART

What with approximately 2200 items available in the original comic art category each day, and with several hundred auctions ending each day, finding the choice art pieces can be a daunting task. I'll also give some tips on how to get the upper hand on eBay comic art, and maybe how to win an auction or two as you go along. But be prepared to pay! Even "low-end" artists like Sal Buscema, who I happen to like, now fetch several hundred dollars for a single 1970s page. But there are still bargains to be had for all levels of collector from beginner to expert, cheapskate to big spender, even on the wild and woolly free-for-all that is the Internet!

Chris Boyko has been collecting comic art, ECs, Silver Age Marvels, and Dick Tracy memorabilia for the past 25 years and is running out of room. He has attended numerous auctions and buys and sells on eBay on a regular basis. He also edited the second edition of **The Comic Art Price Guide** by Jerry Weist.


OH HELLO MR TRUMP! I WAS JUST THINKING OF A GOOD TITLE FOR MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY
AH, A LITERARY CAPSTONE TO A GREAT LIFE!
MY BOOK WAS CALLED THE ART OF THE DEAL
GRGH THAT'S NICE
IVANA PULLED A RUNY NAMED TRUMP BUYS A LOTTA JUNK.

What would this fine piece of **Bloom County** art from 1989 by Berke Breathed be worth if it showed up on eBay? Recent sales on eBay in 2001 included three 1988 dailies, with realized prices ranging from $355 to $585, but none of them had Bill the Cat, so it's hard to guess!

ODDBALL COMICS

The Very Elusive Blue Circle #6

by Michael Browning

You can't judge a book by its cover. I found that out real quick when I started collecting Rural Home Publishing/Enwill Associates Books. The last issues of this publisher's books all contain remaindered comics for their interiors. *Blue Circle Comics* #6 is one such example. The book is one not pictured in the *Gerber Photojournal* and has no white space. *Gerber* even questions the book's existence. *CBM* ran a cover in an earlier issue, but it is different than on the copy I bought out of a $2 box a couple years back.

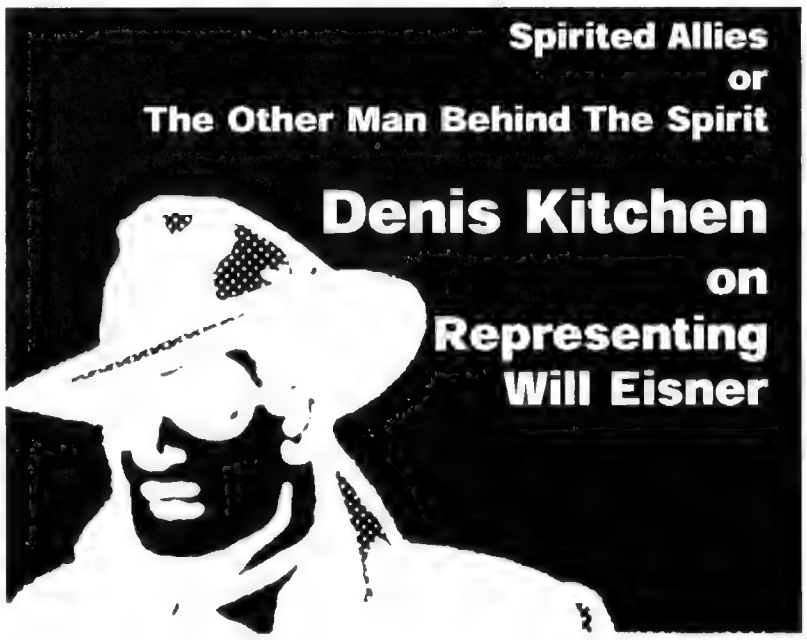
Mine has a cover with text on it, unlike the one pictured in *CBM* (and the three other copies of the book I own). They all have the same cover art, but my first copy has "Featuring ... Bugsy Siegle[sic]" over the art. The interiors, as with all those last Rural Home Publishing/Enwill Associates books, vary. My *Blue Circle* 6s have different Fox books inside.

Rural was a strange company with a very small output. The final issues of their top three books (or rather, their three books that lasted the longest of any of their titles) all contain remaindered books. I collect these oddities and have purchased eleven *Red Circle* #4s, the four *Blue Circle* #6s, seven *Blazing Comics* #5s and a single copy of *Blazing Comics* #6, which also contains a Fox remaindered book. Only two of my *Blazing Comics* #5s contain their original interior and I believe them to be very, very rare, as they are the only copies I've ever seen and several collectors, upon discovering that I had not one but two copies, have contacted me trying to purchase at least one of my copies.

The cover is *Blazing Comics* #5, but the interior is *Cloak and Dagger*. The book appears to be a Fox Comic, due to having the title of the book at the top of each page. The art is the same rudimentary art used in 1950s Fox books. Its first page is missing, just as nearly all Fox remaindered books are, their first page being the inside front cover. However, there is no listing in any guide that proves Fox ever published such a book.

One of my *Blazing* #5s contains—without a doubt—*Feature Stories Magazine* #4, which several collectors doubt even exists, and was removed from the *Overstreet* listings this year. The interior pages of that *Blazing* 5 even say "Feature Stories Magazine" at the top of each story page and contains the story of the "Iroquois Trail," which isn't part of any of the other issues of this Fox title.

So far, inside the covers of the Rural Home books, I've got a *Pedro* #1, a *Crimes By Women*, a *Quantrell's Raiders*, an issue of *Will Rogers*, a *Dorothy Lamour*, a *Marvel Tales*, an *Operation Peril*, a *Strange Suspense Stories*, a *MAD* and many other books. The Rural Home books started out costing collectors very little, now they're running into hundreds of dollars per issue. On auction sites and in advertisements, the books sell as fast as they're listed. These last gasp comics are definitely the oddest of the oddball books. But, each issue is a surprise, because you can't judge *these* books by their covers!



by Bill Baker

To say that Denis Kitchen and Will Eisner have enjoyed a fairly solid and long-lived relationship is more than a bit of an understatement. For literally a generation, Kitchen served as Eisner's primary publisher, and was largely responsible for the continued presence in both comic and book shops of The Spirit and many other new and seminal works by the Grand Master. However, when Kitchen Sink Press, the publishing house that Kitchen founded and ran for three decades, closed its doors a few years back, it signaled a change in their professional relationship. Shortly after KSP's demise, Kitchen let slip his publisher guise to assume his current role as Eisner's literary agent. Below, Kitchen talks about his new career and involvement in making sure that Eisner's work will be readily available to the next generation of comic aficionados, and even maps out some of the new possibilities for Spirit-centric merchandise that have recently presented themselves.

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE: *You've known Will Eisner for years, and have been publishing or representing him for quite a while now, correct?*

DENIS KITCHEN: Yes. We first met at a Phil Seuling convention in, I believe, 1971. So it's a thirty-year relationship, and during nearly all of that time I served as his primary publisher. For the last couple of years, I've been his literary agent, and art agent.

CBM: *I suspect that, in that capacity, you probably played a rather large role in helping set up the deal with DC for the* Will Eisner Library *and* The Spirit Archives *series.*

KITCHEN: Yes. *The Spirit Archives* is a realization of one of the things I had dreamt of doing [in the past], but the investment in a project of that scope, and [printing it] in full color, was something I could never quite pull off at Kitchen Sink Press. So I'm delighted that DC is doing it, and doing it with such taste and attention to detail.

When Kitchen Sink Press collapsed, one of my first responsibilities was to find the right new home for Will. DC, I think, was an ideal fit for Will's graphic novels. Even the fact that they're a New York company, and nearly all of his work is New York based, seems fitting. At the same time, Will has always prided himself on being an independent, and he really wasn't seeking an exclusive relationship with a single company. I made it a point to place certain elements of his work at Dark Horse, and at NBM, who also have a place for Will Eisner in their library.

But, obviously, as his agent I have to weigh a lot of factors in making recommendations. The financial bottom line is *a* factor, but it's not the sole one.

CBM: *How do you feel about the success of DC's* Spirit Archives*?*

KITCHEN: I'm thrilled. I think even Paul Levitz and other executives at DC were somewhat surprised that it did as well as it did [out of the gate]. Because I think most of them are Will Eisner fans, and they wanted to do the books for sentimental reasons, and everyone *hoped* it would do well. But the fact that the series has done *so* well was a very pleasant surprise. As I understand it, it has actually been outselling the Batman and Superman counterparts. [Laughter] So that's very gratifying.

CBM: *What were some of the considerations and concerns you had when you were entering and in the midst of the negotiations with DC and the other companies Will works with now?*

KITCHEN: Well, some of them involved the expectations that Will has of retaining adequate control [over his work]. Working out of a small house like Kitchen Sink Press, it was

Kitchen (left) with Will Eisner

very easy to accommodate Will in almost every way. A house like DC, which is part of such a large media empire, operates under very different rules. And even a well-intentioned executive, like Paul, can't always do what he'd like. He has to play by certain corporate rules. So my primary concern, and Will's concern, was that it might be difficult for Will's properties to fit into that kind of environment. But I'm happy to say that DC was able to bend and stretch some of its own rules to accommodate Will in their library, and I think everybody has been very happy with the results.

CBM: *What were some of the factors that made the books you've placed with Dark Horse, and NBM, particularly good fits for those publishing houses?*

KITCHEN: In NBM's case, they had already gotten a toehold with Will on his adaptations of literary classics. Will had agreed to place *The Last Knight*, which is his retelling of the *Don Quixote* story, with NBM just prior to my becoming his literary agent. But it seemed to me a logical fit in NBM's line. They subsequently are doing *The White Whale*, which is the *Moby Dick* adaptation, and will continue to have the inside track on similar adaptations of that type.

Dark Horse has done *Last Day in Vietnam*, and done an excellent job of promoting and selling it. Michael Martens, their marketing guru, even used actual army dog tags to promote this book. It's hard to articulate, without getting into proprietary areas, why their particular offer was better, but suffice it to say that everyone's happy with Dark Horse's handling here as well. And sales have been very strong. Likewise, we thought they were best for the compilation of *Shop Talk* interviews that Will did years ago in the old *Spirit* magazine and *Will Eisner Quarterly*. Diana Schutz at Dark Horse has just finished re-editing, and with her staff redesigning, a dozen or so of these interviews that Will had with leading comics creators, and we're delighted with the collection. As a result, Dark Horse will be tackling a similar project, called *One-on-One*. I'll leave it to Dark Horse to reveal the surprise collaborator. But suffice to say there will be an ongoing relationship with all three of these companies. There is also possibly a project involving Jon Cooke at TwoMorrows. I think it's in the best interest of Will Eisner *and* the industry to spread the work out a bit.

CBM: *Are there any other benefits, aside from the obvious one of making sure that his work is available to the reading public, to the new relationships that you've helped Will develop with these companies?*

KITCHEN: For the first time there's been a greater emphasis on merchandising. For example, in the first sixty years of the Spirit's existence, there were *no* three dimensional representations [of the character]. Suddenly, in the course of one year, there's a Spirit statue from DC, a Spirit action figure from Graphitti, and soon there'll be a Spirit statue in Dark Horse's Famous [Cartoon] Characters series. So that's a direct offshoot of paying attention to merchandising. There's also a Spirit lunchbox, tee shirts and other objects in the works. Hopefully, [these are] just the tip of the iceberg.

CBM: *I suspect I know the answer, but: What's the best thing about your job of representing Will?*

KITCHEN: [General laughter] Lots of long conversations.

One of the benefits of being a publisher in general, if you do it right, is you get to develop relationships with people you respect and, more often than not, people you like. And to have spent thirty years talking with Will, and working with Will, certainly [has] been a special perk that comes with the job. I wouldn't want to trade that for anything. You can't assign any monetary value to something like that. It's one of those wonderful intangibles of being a publisher, or an agent. It's, in fact, too easy to take for granted, sometimes. But I'm constantly hearing anecdotes, or getting insights that I wish other people had a chance to share. I'm kicking myself for *not* having taken more careful notes over the years, because I can't remember everything. Only now am I starting to really record these things in detail, because I don't want to forget any of them.

by Bill Baker

As the man who DC Comics has entrusted with the job of packaging The Spirit Archives *series, Dale Crain is intimately involved with the multitude of decisions, great and small, that determine the content, look and every other important aspect of this historic and vital library. He also oversees the actual prepress and other production processes that result in not only a clear, accurate reading experience, but a final product that will hold up through repeated readings for generations to come. Crain takes us on a quick tour of what his job generally entails, fills in a few of the important gaps in our knowledge concerning how one of these volumes is assembled,*

and even gives us a glimpse of the entire process from an insider's perspective.

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE: *Well, let's begin with the basics: What's your background and training, when did you join the Time-Warner team, how would you describe your job at DC, and why were you assigned to head up with* The Spirit Archives*?*

DALE CRAIN: I've been in publishing in general for over 25 years and comics specifically for 15. I began at Fantagraphics Books as an Art Director for several of their magazines and books. In 1990 I was lured away by Richard Bruning to DC and was an Art Director here for a year, then left to work with Rick Marschall producing a series of classic comic strip reprint books (*Little Nemo*, *Krazy Kat*, etc.) for various U.S. and European publishers. A year or two of freelance followed where I worked with art spiegleman on *RAW*, and various jobs for *The New York Times*, *The Daily News*, co-editing, designing and packaging my comic strip history book *The Comic Strip Century* and wound up back on staff at DC as a Production Manager before being promoted to Collected Editions Editor.

Describe my job? Grueling and rewarding!

I was the heir apparent to edit *The Spirit* I suppose. Not only was I in place as the Collected Editions Editor, I'd like to think that with all my experience with book packaging and comic strips in the past that there was a certain comfort level around DC with me handling a project as important as *The Spirit*.

CBM: *Is this particular assignment a little like a fanboy dream come true for you? In other words, have you been a long-time fan of Eisner's work, or is this all a process of discovery for you?*

CRAIN: Well, of course I was excited to hear DC was going to be doing *The Spirit* and that I was in the right spot to edit it — Will is a giant!— but, I do have to say, and not to take anything away from *The Spirit* or Will, I'm frankly not much of a "starry-eyed fanboy" these days. I mean, I've been very fortunate to have worked on books with and by a virtual creme-de-la-creme of comics greats living and dead; spiegleman, [Robert] Crumb, the Hernandez Bros., Alan Moore, [Milton] Caniff, [Winsor] McCay. So, I tended to look at The Spirit as a job — a really cool job, and one I loved and was truly excited about!

CBM: *So, what's the best part of your job, and what would be the worst aspect of it?*

CRAIN: The best part? Working with and getting to know Will better has been an incredible pleasure. He has to be the kindest and most professional guy that has ever been in the business.

Though I do have to say holding that first printed copy of each volume runs a close second!

Worst? Details. You just wouldn't believe how many...

CBM: *What are your chief concerns when assembling these volumes? What are some of the major obstacles and difficulties that you encounter, and how do you overcome or circumvent them?*

CRAIN: What I just mentioned; the details! I am very meticulous about the quality of the reproduction to do justice to all of Will's work. For the [World War II] and pre-War years we have to reproduce the strips from the printed *Spirit Sections* themselves as Will has no original art or printers proofs from this period—that will change after the war. Thank goodness I could call upon my friend Bill Blackbeard for source material—that guy is a lifesaver, he has runs of everything! It took me several rounds of tests to fine-tune the quality of both the color and the black-line work before the series even started, but both Will and I are very pleased with the way the series is looking.

Bottom line; I just want to produce a book that will do justice to all of Will's work, and for it to be the best possible book it can be in the time allowed.

CBM: *How do you decide what editorial content will appear in each volume? What guides your choice of contributors—such as the folks writing the intros—and all other materials included in each volume?*

CRAIN: Most of the work when starting a series like this is done up front—the establishing of a template, so to speak—as soon as we get a go-ahead on a project. For example, I had to look at the entire run of *The Spirit* to break it down into what will be 24 equal-sized uniform volumes.

I work very closely with Will on not only the writer but the theme for each of the volume's introductions. As a matter of fact, it was Will's idea to write the intro for Volume Six about his work for the Army while he was away from *The Spirit*.

CBM: *What kind of concerns do you have to take into consideration when choosing the basic materials that physically make up the books, and how do those materials affect the process of creating the books? What I'm getting at is this: What governs your choice of paper, bindings, covers, etc., and how do these choices affect the use of modern production and printing techniques in actual production?*

CRAIN: Again, all this was determined well before Volume One ever got near the printer. Alison Gill (DC's Production Director), Richard Bruning (Creative Director), Georg Brewer (Design Director), Amie Brockway (Art Director) and I all sat down and came up with an overall concept of the package itself, and ran it by Will for his approval. We all were very enthusiastic about the series and between all of us at DC we must have about a century's worth of combined experience in producing books, so it actually all went very smoothly. Having the look of the package itself approved was

then a matter of working with Digital Chameleon on getting the rich black-lines and somewhat muted color we wanted for the stories themselves.

CBM: *Why don't you take us through the entire process, from the beginning to end? You know, from the assembling of the actual art reproduced in the books, to the editorial and lay-out design, through the prepping and prepress and all the way to the actual printing and packaging of a typical volume.*

CRAIN: Phew!

Obviously the first thing I need to do is make certain that we have the source material in hand for each volume, these come from Bill Blackbeard. I then go through them to make sure they are repro-quality and assign a physical breakdown to the book and impose it: How many pages for the Intro, how many pages of strips, etc. At about the same time I will start on the manuscript and speak with Will (if I haven't already) about the introduction and assign that. The next step is getting together with Amie Brockway (the Art Director) and having her select what images she wants to use for the cover and spot art that will illustrate the book's front matter.

Then I send the pages out to the separator for black-line reconstruction and coloring. A couple of rounds of proofs to nail the color, then the files along with the cover and design pages are sent to our printer in Hong Kong. A couple more rounds of proofs from them and then we have our finished books.

This may all sound pretty simple but we have had a few bumps in the road in getting these books out, not to mention the fact that we are doing three a year!

CBM: *How do you feel about the success of the project? Did the ground swell of appreciation, and the accompanying sell-through on the early volumes, take you by surprise? And are there any downsides to this happy event?*

CRAIN: I have to say I was wonderfully surprised at Volume One's success! I was afraid that the entire comics market today only cared about mutants and Manga.... I was very proud to be associated with something that I (and I think everyone else involved) consider both an artistic and commercial success.

Downsides? Nada.

CBM: *What do you hope that the hardcore fans get from this library? How about the new fans, and the general public, who are just now getting exposed to this seminal work?*

CRAIN: It really does give anyone the opportunity to own a complete run of one of the greatest comics ever. I'll say it again: Will is a genius, and to have this documented in a series that will be around for years to come is something important to comics as a whole, acknowledging and appreciating our past. We all get to see Will, step-by-step, give birth to the vocabulary of comics.

In my opinion there have been maybe a dozen truly great and timeless comic strips and comic books — *Terry* [*and the Pirates*], *Dick Tracy*, *Nemo*, *Pogo*, *Gasoline Alley*, [*Little Orphan*] *Annie*, *Krazy Kat*, *Wash Tubbs*, Lee with Kirby and Ditko, *Batman: Year One*, *Watchmen*, *Maus* — most of which have been in the last few years collected into books and now *The Spirit* get its due!

CBM: *What do you get from working on this project, aside from a paycheck? Have there been any additional benefits that might have been unforeseen, but have made it all the more rewarding?*

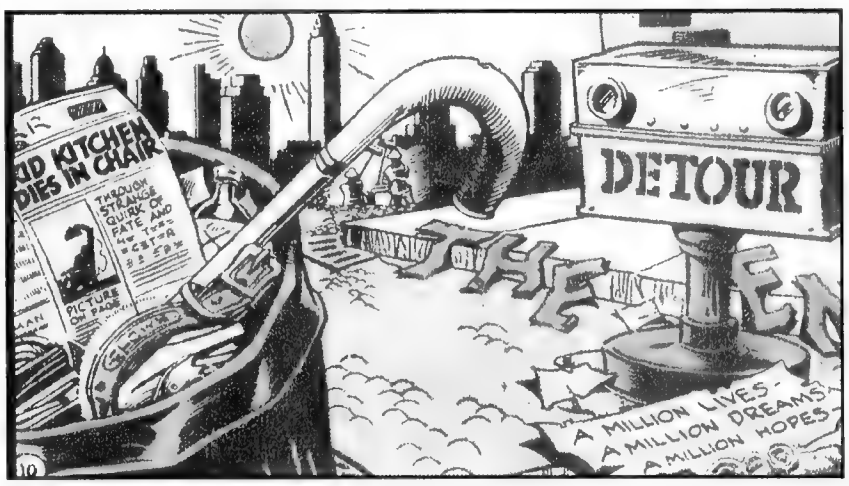
CRAIN: I get a bookshelf full of Will Eisner's *The Spirit*! I am kinda quoting Paul Levitz here, who had the vision and was responsible for the deal with Will to collect *The Spirit*. A year or more ago when I told Paul how great I thought it was that he had put this together he replied, "It is nice to be a part of making something happen that I want to see on my own bookshelf." I just thought that was great...

Working with Will has been the best. I can't tell you how much I admire the man. A total gentleman, and all pro, all the way!

CBM: *Any final thoughts?*

CRAIN: Nah, I gotta get back to work...

ODDENDA:



'Kid Kitchen' (see trash in can) didn't survive this "Just a Story" done in an Eisner studio style for an All-American/National comic of the mid 1940s; go figure!

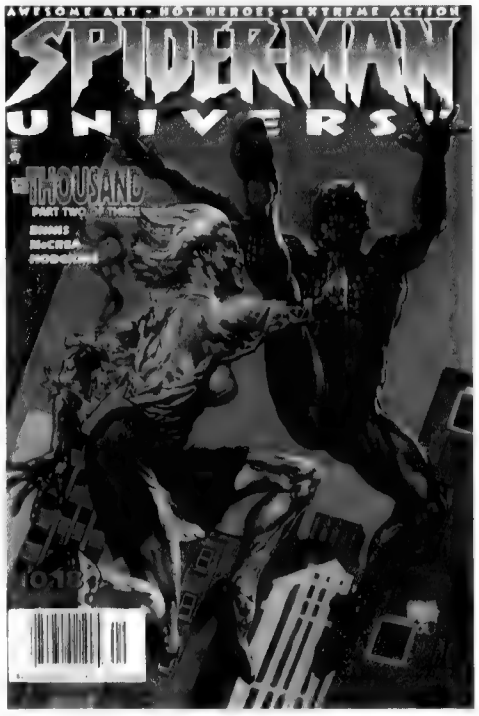
NEW & NOTEWORTHY

By J.C. Vaughn, Executive Editor

"ACTOR" TO SUPPORT GOLDEN AGE, SILVER AGE CREATORS

Launched with a fund-raiser auction at this year's MegaCon in Florida, the new non-profit organization ACTOR officially opened its Los Angeles base July 3, 2001.

ACTOR (A Commitment To Our Roots) is dedicated to helping veteran comic book creators, particularly those of the Golden Age and Silver Age, who may not have been covered by **health benefits** or **retirement plans**.



The organization reports Hollywood celebrities and entertainment figures such as *Clerks* director Kevin Smith and *Seinfeld* writer David Mandel are already pledging their support along with Marvel Comics founding father and *X-Men* co-creator Stan Lee.

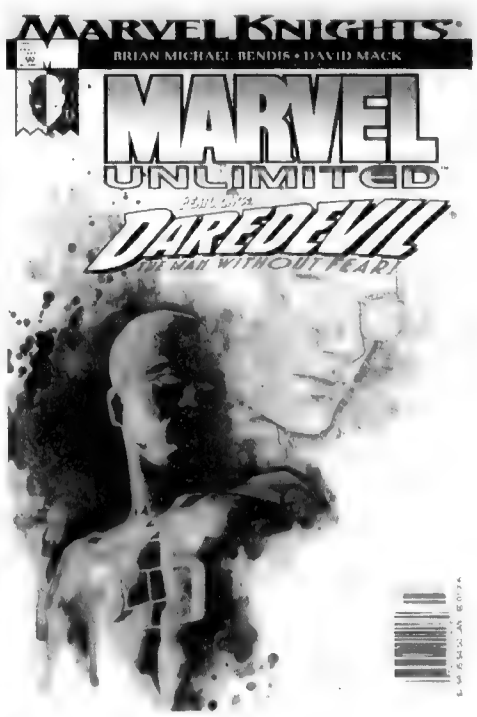
"ACTOR needs and deserves everyone's whole-hearted support," Lee said in the ACTOR press release. "There is no better way to show our appreciation to those who, in the infancy of comic books, gave so much reading enjoyment to so many – for so little reward."

The group is a publicly supported and federally chartered 501-(C)(3) non-profit organization based in Los Angeles and Tampa, Fla. ACTOR generates and collects contributions both private and corporate, and by working through its six member Disbursement Committee made up of the comic industry's most respected statesmen, distribute funds to worthy recipients in financial or medical need.

The ACTOR Executive Committee is comprised of Jim McLauchlin (Senior Editor, Wizard Entertainment), Mark A. Alessi (CEO and Publisher, CrossGen Comics), Brian Pulido (President, Chaos! Comics), Pat McCallum (Editor-in-Chief, Wizard Entertainment), Joe Quesada (Editor-in-Chief, Marvel Comics), Jim Valentino (Publisher, Image Comics), and Mike Richardson (Publisher, Dark Horse Comics).

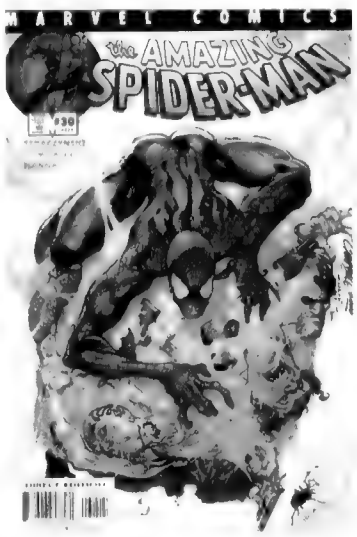
The Fund Disbursement Committee includes Roy Thomas (former Editor-in-Chief, Marvel Comics), George Perez (Senior Artist, CrossGen Comics), Joe Kubert (founder of the Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art), Dennis O'Neil (former Senior Editor, DC Comics), John Romita Sr. (former Art Director, Marvel Comics), and Dick Giordano (former Editor-in-Chief, Charlton Comics). For more information or to send donations:

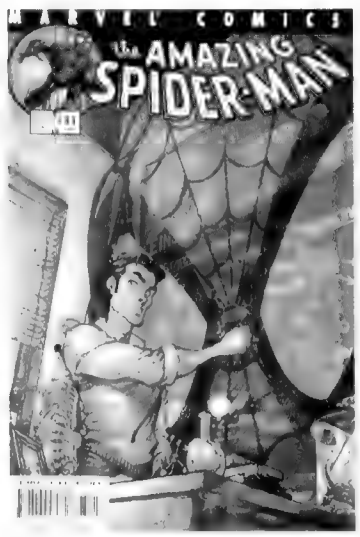
ACTOR (A Commitment To Our Roots), 11301 Olympic Blvd, #587, Los Angeles, CA 90064. Their telephone number is (310) 268-1530.



MORE MARVEL NEWSSTAND VARIANTS

We've spotted another newsstand variant from Marvel, but they still haven't been very forthcoming with much information about them...





Spider-Man Universe #18 features Part Two of Three of "The Thousand," in a title the Direct Market knows as Tangled Web #2. Where does the #18 come from? Anyone? Anyone?

If you're spotting Marvel newsstand variants that we're not mentioning, drop us a line at **feedback@gemstonepub.com**.

In addition to *Spider-Man Universe*, there has also been a second issue of *Marvel Unlimited*. With the addition of

the Marvel Knights logo banner, this title has got to be in the running for the most unwieldy logo in the history of comics. Though it features no number on the cover, it contains the subsequent issue of the current run of *Daredevil* reported on last issue.

Also as mentioned in this column last time, the indicia is unchanged from the Direct Market versions of the book.

SPIDER-MAN IS "AMAZING" AGAIN

With *Amazing Spider-Man* #30 (current series), writer **J. Michael Straczynski** came on board. The writer-producer-creator of TV's *Babylon 5* and the comic books *Rising Stars* and *Midnight Nation* has credentials enough to earn him benefit of the doubt, but there were three specific questions:

1. Was this just another Hollywood guy showboating in comics?

2. Would it be a significant enough change in direction from the previous morass in the Spidey department at Marvel?

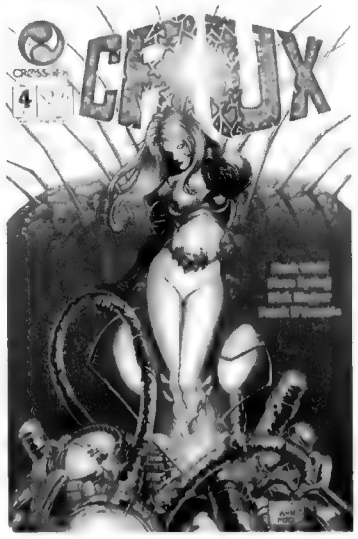
3.Would readers respond to the regular Spidey after the highly successful *Ultimate Spider-Man* series by writer Brian Michael Bendis?

The answers are:

1. No, this gentleman has a story to tell and thus far it's superb.

2. Yes, his first issue is already a hot ticket item.

3. Yup. One of the best things about *Ultimate Spider-Man*, particularly coming after a decade of Spider-Man without direction, was that it reminded some of us that we want to care about Spidey. JMS has given us a Spidey we can once again enthusiastically care about. The story is clever and in each case so far leaves the reader wanting more.



RETRO-FUTURISM TODAY

Dean Motter, creator of *Mister X* and DC's *Terminal City*, has again started down the artistically interesting road of retro-futurism, utilizing concepts of the future that were held in the past to weave together a compelling story.

If you don't quite know what's meant by "retro-futurism," for example, the 1930s vision of 2001 included vast skyways, robot servants, zeppelins, and so on. Motter specializes in creating worlds where those concepts took root.

His new title, *Electropolis*, (**Image Comics**) features all the trappings of a Mickey Spillane novel, but the main character is a robot detective. The visuals are always interesting and the story has several laugh-out-loud moments. Highly recommended.

SOJOURN, CRUX

CrossGen Comics, who have made a splash with their everything-old-is-new-again studio approach to making comics, have kicked off two of their new titles, *Crux* and *Sojourn* in compelling fashion.

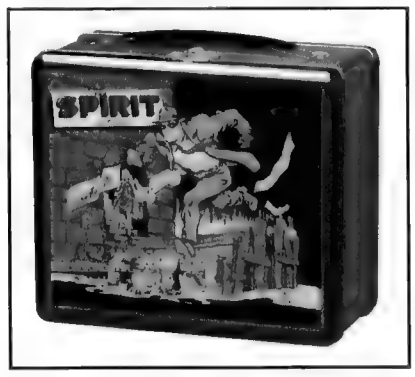
Crux is the first of CrossGen's books set on Earth, and it begins in the distant past, on Atlantis. Events quickly unfold to the future, when not only has Atlantis been destroyed, but the entire human race appears to have gone missing. Written by Mark Waid and illustrated by Steve Epting, Crux is a beautiful production with substance to match. Definitely worth checking out.

Sojourn is an epic fantasy tale, something that could easily appeal to Tolkien fans.

Almost all of the CrossGen comics issued to date have been beautiful, but *Sojourn* is simply stunning. The story by Ron Marz is brought to vivid life by Greg Land (pencils), Drew Geraci (inks), and Cesar Rodriguez (colors), and combines the best elements of the fantasy genre in persuasive style. Highly recommended.

HAVE THE SPIRIT FOR LUNCH

Dark Horse has had a great series of lunch boxes, but they've just turned it up a notch for fans of Will Eisner's *The Spirit*. Too bad there's no thermos! Check your local comic shop for this one, though. It's sure to be a hit.



The Michael Naiman Report

The San Diego Con...

This year's San Diego show was exciting as usual. It appeared to be easier to navigate the hall because of the expanded square footage. Clearly this is no longer a "comic book show" but one more about the "popular arts." Dreamworks had a big-time presence with their Time Machine model. Look for even more movie-oriented, superhero-licensed entities next year.

With the grading pendulum currently swinging towards the liberal side, many new collectors and a few old speculators spent their time carefully combing the bins for "slab-worthy" (sorry Elaine!) books. Many were mining for those books that used to be considered in the VF range, purchasing them and hoping that they'll be graded higher by the grading service so that they can pyramid their profits in a timely manner.

Can't tell you the many times I heard this conversation from people walking up to dealers..."Got any 9.4's?" I have an idea: some publisher should just publish a book called "9.4." They'd sell millions!

Many dealers reported sales were down slightly, but the number of sales were up. There appeared to be major price resistance to the extremely high prices being asked for encapsulated books that one could not examine for defects. There were not many high grade, unslabbed books for sale. Same went for key books.

Behind the Scenes: the grading company has decided not to go forward with their "restoration removal service." Congratulations to CGC for listening to the opinions of many long-time collectors and to the petition of the American Association of Comicbook Collectors which was circulated at San Diego!

San Diego is not the type of convention where your Mom and Pop collector walks in with an attic collection. However, Ed Jaster did manage to pick up a 12,000-book collection in Los Angeles before hitting the aisles of SD. A few boxes were at his booth for the early bird shoppers. Those who found these boxes were treated to some nice, unslabbed early high grade Marvels.

Some reported SD sales include: Action #221 VF $150; Air Boy V#9 issue #8 FN/VF $60, V#9 issue #9 FN/VF $75; Amazing Spider-Man #28 FN/VF $235; Exciting #60 GD $45; Flash #105 Apparent FN/VF with color touch and a small piece added $950; Hulk #102 VF/NM $175, #181 VF $425; Jackie Gleason #11 (DC) VF- $90; Space Detective #3 FR/GD $55; Spy Smasher #7 GD $125; Superman #74 VG $95; Weird Science #20 VF $160. For the high grade pedigree collector a Mile High Star Spangled #68 graded 9.0 sold for $3,250; Mile High copy of Girl's Romance #7 VF $500 and the #12 NM $450.

Joe and Nadia Mannarino's All-Star Auctions Simul-Con IV proved to be another rousing success. Those unable to attend the show were able to bid on line. If you were lucky enough to be in San Diego, one could inspect the goods! Some of the original art sales included: Johnny Craig's infamous cover art to Vault of Horror #32 realized $12,926; a 1937 Gottfredson Mickey Mouse Sunday featuring Mickey and Goofy brought $7,975; 1960s Donald Duck cover art to a coloring book realized a whopping $7,590, 5X presale estimate; a 1934 Mickey Mouse daily from the "Sacred Jewel" sequence sold for $5,445; a 1984 Peanuts daily featuring Snoopy brought $4,642; Carmine Infantino's recreation of the cover art to Flash #300 sold for $3,298; John Byrne X-Men #109 art also brought $3,298; a Kirby page from Avengers #3 sold for $2,198 and an Infantino Star Wars (#32) cover sold for $1,897. Comicbook sales included: Mile High copies of Police Comics #29 NM $2,739 (4X Guide), #41 NM $2,032 (4.5X), #44 NM $2,002 (6.1X), #42 NM $1,782 (5X); Gaines File copies (set #2) of Weird Science #5 $2,530 (5.2X), #7 $2,260 (4.7X), #9 $2,612 (5.4X), #11 $2,173 (6.7X), #12(#1) $7,590 (5X), #13 $3,322 (4X), #14 $3,905 (4.6X).

The American Association of Comicbook Collectors annual dinner honoring Captain America's 60th anniversary had some eye-popping artwork on display. Some of the original art included: cover to Cap #100; splash pages from Cap #7 and #9; full color original Joe Simon model sheet for Cap and the original unpublished cover from Tales of Suspense #96. Pro attendees included John Romita Sr. and Jr., Gene Colan, George Tuska, Bob Haney, Marie Severin, Ramona Fradon, Dan DeCarlo, Julie Schwartz, Carmine Infantino, Ric Estrada, and Russ Heath. The best-kept secret of this get together is the original art auction.

Along with the usual single-issue comics for sale in San Diego, one also had their choice of picking up the graphic novel versions of their favorite story arcs. The DC Archives and Marvel Masterworks series flew off the shelves of many dealers. After the second day, they were very hard to locate. This begs the question about the future success of this particular form of publishing. Will the graphic novel reprints cause their single-issue brethren to stagnate in value? History has shown this to be true. Look at the EC valuations through the years and the numerous Barks/Disney reprints and their effect on original issues. This has held back any rapidly escalating price guide changes in these titles. But, should this be considered a "bad" development in the hobby?

Many retailers welcome the addition of this type of "comic" to their stores. Jamie Graham, owner of Graham Crackers (a multi-store chain in Illinois) welcomes the addition of the graphic novel. "This offers the purchaser the ability to catch up on a story arc in case they missed their weekly installment. Also, if one of the issues happens to become "hot," and have a spike in value, you do not have to pay an inflated back issue price for the single issue. I also feel that the availability of these books in mall book stores and shopping centers will enable the hobby to reach out to a greater audience. The 'stigma' of reading a 'funny book' is removed when the physical appearance changes. No longer kept in a funny plastic bag and hidden away in a cardboard box, you can place the item on your bookshelf. It looks like a book. Feels like a book. It must be a 'book!' Suddenly the comic of yesteryear has grown up and become 'presentable' to the non-comic aware public."

Does this portend the doom of all single issue books published since the late 80s failing to raise like blue chip stocks in the price guide? Most of the popular major publisher's series titles have now been reprinted in graphic novel form. Time will tell.

CBM MarketWatch

A report of market indicator sales (including % of Guide) by Michael Naiman

Action Okajima
#86 VF $400 94%

Adventures In 3-D
#1 NM w/glass. $96 69%

All-American
#34 VG+ $158 65%
#38 GD $103 85%

All Flash
#23 GD- $61 1.05X

All Select
#1 VG $2,000 1.08X
#9 VG $144 62%

All-Top
#12 FN $290 92%

Amazing Adventures
#1 NM $50 1.11X

Amazing Fantasy
#15 VG- $1,650 71%

Amazing Spider-Man
#1 VG+ $1,850 1.15X
#2 FN+ $950 1.33X
#10 App. FN $40 17%
#28 VF+ $720 2.31X
#29 VF+ $363 2.71X
#68 VF+ $37 89%
#100 NM $200 91%
#122 NM $200 1.21X
#129 VG $49 1.41X

Atom
#7 FN+ $25 30%

Avengers
#1 FN $550 86%
#4 FN $400 93%
#100 NM $125 1.56X

Batman
#48 VG $199 95%
#66 VF $380 75%
#80 FN $200 94%

Batman Annual
#6 VF $95 1.36X

Black Terror
#1 App. VG $425 75%

Blondie
#1 FN- $65 87%

Brave and Bold
#1 FN $425 69%
#45 NM $100 1.33X
#57 NM- $140 82%
#62 NM $81 74%
#66 VF- $13 58%

Chamber of Darkness
#4 VF $25 78%

Comic Cavalcade
#1 Ap. VG $1,800 1.09X
#3 GD $150 92%

Conan
#9 NM $32 80%

Daredevil (GA)
#43 VG+ $25 52%
#54 GD $14 82%
#75 FN $17 57%

Daredevil (SA)
#1 FN- $350 76%

Detective
#118 GD $100 1.03X
#195 VG+ $150 1.53X
#220 VG+ $130 1.55X
#404 NM $25 66%

Dollman
#18 FN $160 1.28X

Famous Funnies (1934)
#1 FR $1,520 50%

Fantastic Four
#1 FN $1,800 75%
#4 VG $275 64%
#15 FN- $80 91%
#18 FN+ $100 1.14X
#48 NM- $1,085 1.03X
#48 NM $1,650 1.57X

Fighting Yank
#8 GD $55 95%

Flash
#112 VG $78 98%

Frogman
#1 FN $38 1.01X

Funny Stuff
#5 VF $76 46%

Ghost Manor
#22 VF $5 52%

Green Lantern Okajima
#15 VF+ $850 1.05X

House of Mystery
#144 NM $100 91%

Hulk
#1 App. FN $975 54%
#181 VF $450 82%

Iron Man & Sub-Mariner
#1 NM $88 59%

It's About Time
#1 NM $50 1.19X

Jimmy Olsen
#20 VG+ $36 76%
#49 VF $32 56%
#50 VF $30 52%
#134 VF $21 44%
#146 NM $21 84%

Journey Into Mystery
#112 VF+ $309 2.02X

Justice
#4 VG $32 1.06X

Justice League of America
#9 VF+ $275 93%

Lois Lane
#1 GD $108 43%
#36 VF- $25 52%
#47 VF+ $45 83%
#56 NM $36 60%
#60 VF+ $36 1.03X
#67 VF+ $36 1.03X
#100 NM- $32 1.28X

Magnus Robot Fighter
#1 VG $42 92%
#3 NM- $118 1.07X

Marvel Mystery Okajima
#55 VF- $1,000 1.35X
#57 VF+ $1,500 2.02X

Master Mile High
#25 NM- $4,700 5.22X

Men's Adventure
#23 VF+ $130 1.34X

Operation Peril
#4 VG- $38 86%

Phantom Stranger
#18 NM- $41 1.64X

Planet Comics
#2 GD $386 94%
#18 VF- $600 2.27X
#20 FN+ $365 92%
#40 FN $195 85%
#59 VG+ $90 74%

Police
#41 VF $200 66%

Riot
#1 VG $55 92%

Rulah Okajima
#19 VF $400 1.03X

Sgt. Fury
#13 NM- $400 1.11X

Sharp Comics
#2 VG $72 95%

Shock Detective
#20 VG $60 1.32X

Sensation
#35 VF+ $400 1.33X
#52 GD $42 1.05X
#66 VG $51 64%
#70 VG- $67 84%
#106 VG $78 93%

Showcase
#22 GD+ $145 45%
#60 VF $133 64%
#61 VF+ $50 49%
#79 VF+ $22 63%
#88 NM $10 56%

Spy Fighters
#1 VG $45

Star Spangled
#65 FR $80 1.09X

Star Spangled War Stories
#(2) 132 FR $42 1.42X

Sub-Mariner
#38 VG+ $180 1.10X

Superman Okajima
#29 VF $1,500 2.07X
#30 VF+ $1,500 1.08X

Tales from the Crypt
#22 GD $23 34%
#28 VF $225 80%
#30 FN $123 1.03X
#30 GD $23 58%
#34 GD $36 Guide

Tales of Suspense
#63 FN- $45 69%

Tales To Astonish
#2 FR $66 2.44X

Tarzan Winnepeg
#229 NM $14 50%

Time Tunnel
#1 NM $50 77%

Tomahawk
#1 VG+ $350 1.11X

Tops In Humor
#2 NM $15 19%

Wambi Mile High
#2 NM $2,100 4.66X

Weird Science-Fantasy
#25 FN+ $150 1.56X

Wonder Woman
#2 App. FN- $630
#2 App. FN- $630 70%
#9 Okajima FN+ $500 1.3X
#31 GD+ $95 1.63X
#74 GD $20 71%

World's Best
#1 GD $1,700 1.25X

Worlds Finest
#19 VF $650 90%

World's Finest Winnepeg
#222 NM $12 Guide
#229 NM $18 1.5X

X-Men
#1 VG $750 67%
#1 FN $1,700 1.01X
#6 NM $800 2.13X
#23 NM $265 2.12X
#94 NM- $600 80%
#94 VG $130 1.21X

Yellow Subm. Gold Key
nn VF+ (w/poster) $209 1.26X

Zoot
#7 GD $58 61%
#14 GD $70 1.15X
#16 VG- $68 72%

MARKET REPORTS

JOHN E. PETTY

HERITAGE COMIC AUCTIONS
100 HIGHLAND PARK VILLAGE 2nd FL
DALLAS, TX 75205-2788
214-252-4392

As we gear up for our first auction, we're seeing a great deal of interest in **high-grade Gold and Silver**, especially NM-quality CGC graded books, which (no surprise) continue to sell for many multiples of guide.

Original art in general continues to do well, with prices continuing to climb as new collectors discover this fascinating niche every day. **eBay** has been a major factor in this price escalation of lower priced items, with choice pieces setting record end-of-auction prices in the higher end venues like Sotheby's and Manning (soon to be joined by Heritage). **EC art** continues to soar, with work by Jack Davis, Graham Ingels, Wally Wood, and other EC superstars being snatched up as soon as it hits the market. In fact we recently tried to order an EC item priced on a retail web site at $4500, but by the time we called the dealer had already turned down $5000 for it from another dealer.

Bronze age art, once consigned to the ghetto of art collections, is suddenly strong, as many people who grew up in that time period now have the disposable income needed to enter the art collecting field. Covers from this period tend to be pounced upon quickly by collectors and permanently leave the market, contributing to a real scarcity of prime Bronze Age material. John Byrne X-Men and John Romita Spider-Man art show increasingly higher demand. Curt Swan, Don Martin and Gil Kane art has also taken off in value since the deaths of those artists.

Art that just ten years ago could be had for pocket change is now changing hands in the three- and four-figure range. There is speculation that, as more and more artists become comfortable with—and dependent on—the computer, original pen-and-ink art may go the way of hand-painted animation cels, leisure suits, and the dodo.

Recent auction activity: a Frazetta page from Danger is Our Business #1 finished at $6,500. On the comics side, a Batman #1 with "Moderate" restoration, CGC graded apparent VF- 7.5, closed at $9,999 (a real bargain, in my opinion, even with the restoration. Overstreet lists this book as $18,200 in FN), and a Batman #1 front cover (just the cover, no comic) in somewhat less than pristine condition ended up selling for $700!

That's it for this time. Remember, keep searching those attics. The next great collection is coming from somewhere...maybe someone you know!

PATRICK MARCHBANKS

GOLDEN/SILVER AGE COMICS
PO BOX 8822
GULFPORT, MS 39506
228-896-5472

With the new Overstreet out and the summer approaching fast the market is in full swing! The new Guide did have several high and fast jumps. I believe the market will be able to handle them and will level out in the long run. Sales continue to be solid in all areas with **Golden Age** heading the list. **Restored copies** have been selling constantly but at average prices, lower and mid grade copies have been selling well at just over Guide. High grade unrestored continue to command record prices. CGC still is a hot topic in the marketplace, however I have seen the astronomically high prices being paid for encapsulated books have calmed down somewhat as the number of these books increases into the market. I am confident that will all change and it will heat up again for some books as soon as CGC releases their population report.

Recent sales: Action Comics #6 App. FN $1,500; Batman #10 GD $400; Flash Comic #9 VG $435; Marvel Mystery #65 VG- $250, #67 GD- $125; Namora #2 VG- $400; Superman #4 GD $418, #7 VG $700, #8 GD $450; X-Men #1 GD $450.

NICK BECKETT

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20 HERITAGE CLOSEST ALBANS,
HERTFORDSHIRE, AL3 4EB,
UNITED KINGDOM
011-44-727-838719)
gwentleaf@aol.com

Greetings from the UK and thanks for allowing us Brits to give you the low-down on what's happening this side of the pond. **Golden Age and** (but especially) **Silver Age** have a market here, albeit somewhat smaller than ten years ago and not exactly self-renewing. The majority of the buyers grew up with the books, with only a few young collectors finding their way back further than 1990. Having said that, it's a solid market and given the average age, a reasonably affluent one.

Many things are different here from the American market, but four that stand out are: (1) There is a relative scarcity of higher grade books. No warehouse, loft or garage sale 'finds' to be had over here! (2) Despite point #1, Brits are generally not prepared to pay multiples of Guide. Premiums on high-grade key issues are acceptable, but the market is a lot less enthusiastic and accepting of this trend than in the US. (3) CGC might as well never have happened! Demand is relatively low and there are a number of folk that consider it a fad that will die. Indeed, a number of buyers are quite happy to buy **CGC-graded items** (but only at around Guide-for-the-grade price, or maybe Guide-plus-a-bit) and crack the slab. One of the reasons is the difficulty with obtaining them; sending your own books for grading, or buying them from the US, involves trusting them to overseas mail, not the most reliable of beasts. Consequently, building a collection of CGC graded books is nigh impossible, so few people have started. (4) The ratio of investor to collector is lower. Title completists are plentiful, but in comparison to the States, few people consider a comics portfolio a way to send the kids to college.

Having said all of that, if the right stuff is stocked, a feeding frenzy can ensue. **Tightly graded** VF+ books and above, priced anywhere between 100%-140% of Guide for the grade, will fly out of the door.

THE MARKET

The **mid-grade** stuff will sit and sit unless nicely priced. Lower-grade reading copies will turn over with steady regularity. Hot titles (and I don't think the top sellers have changed for ten years) include X-Men, Spider-Man, Batman and Justice League, all of which are difficult to keep in stock. Scarce books in anything approaching high grade include very early TTA, TOS and any Journey into Mystery below #110. There is still very much the cult of the artist thing happening here, so that Adams' Green Lantern and Steranko's Strange Tales turn-around is fast. Overall, Marvel sells quicker and in greater numbers than DC, but some Marvel titles go nowhere. TTA and TOS from #60 upwards are so dead, they lie stiff in their mylars.

Recent sales: Amazing Spider-Man #8 FN+ $270; Fantastic Four #66 VF/NM $95; Green Lantern #85 VF+ $55; Justice League of America #43 VF $48; Silver Surfer #6 VF $60; X-Men #53 NM- $80.

See you again next month! Cheerio!

DAVE SINCERE

SINCERE COMICS
MOBILE, AL
sincerecmx@aol.com
1-888-533-6008

With the new Overstreet Guide out, a lot of less-sought-after books have become more notable. Many of the books in Good to Fine condition seem to be too low, and for the most part should be able to sell for more than Guide. Our **Silver Age** sales are usually for low-grade copies, but have been brisk of late, with sales of Silver Age copies priced over $10 being moderate.

The **con season** this year has, so far, been the worst in six years, even after restocking $100,000 in comics (Silver Age). Promoters have been doing a good job, but many of the people that come to the shows are not spending money. This could be due to eBay and CGC grading. Many high-grade books will not sell unless they are CGC graded. An example of this is seen with a 9.5 copy of **Giant Size X-Men #1**. 78 people viewed the book on eBay, with no one bidding on the book for $900. Though Internet sales have been sluggish lately, Internet sales have increased overall. Since GS X-Men #1 was not purchased by anyone, I plan to have the book CGC graded and expect to get $1500 to $2000 for it, even though it could be bought now for $900.

By the next report, I hope to report how the CGC graded books have been received. With the way shows have been going, they may start to become events where dealers mostly buy their books, or where people come more often to see guests or go to seminars rather than buying. This could lead to more dealers doing fewer shows in the future.

Here's a list of **recent sales**: Amazing Spider-Man #129 VF+ $150, #3 FR/GD $175, #5 GD/VG $225; Avengers #4 GD $225; Captain America #105 NM $50; Fantastic Four #5 GD/VG $225; Uncanny X-Men #5 FN- $120

Internet sales: Avengers #2 VG $175; Fantastic Four #12 VF+ $800, #50 VG/FN $41; Hopalong Cassidy #25; VF+ $75; JLA #4 VF/NM $300; Uncanny X-Men #5 VG/FN $105.

Convention sales: Amazing Spider-Man #5 VG- $200; Blackhawk #25 FN- #27 VG+ $100; Detective Comics #359 FN/VF $100; Fantastic Four #28 FN/VF $250; Flash #105 VG $750; Tales to Astonish #100 NM $50; Uncanny X-Men #4 VG $175.

JAMIE NEWBOLD
GINO SIRAGUSA

SOCAL COMICS
8280 CLAIREMONT MESA BLVD #124
SAN DIEGO, CA 92111
858-715-8669
socalcom@aol.com

It was almost 30 years ago that I attended my first **San Diego Comic Convention.** That event heralded my leap forward from comic reader to comic collector. There are significant events in our youth that we cherish, recalling them from time-to-time for the good feelings they produce within us. The first time I drove a car, the first experience with the opposite sex, the first (and last!) skydiving experience and the epiphany that changes our lives when we find something that opens up our world.

The epiphany I'm referring to is my **first Golden Age comic purchase**. In this case, it was at the third ever San Diego convention back in the early 70s. I was already caught up in the Silver Age craze that was energizing the collectability of early Marvel comics. However, I was a DC man and I was buying everything I could find from that venerable publisher that I didn't own. But, I was curious about all these old comics from my father's time. Now, I'd seen the stories these old DC comics displayed in those cool DC 80-Page Giants. I'd just never seen the original comics before. So, I explored that cramped dealers room at the old Sheraton Harbor Inn and strolled the tables for an affordable copy of any one of those old DC comics that caught my eye. Man, it was a tough choice. Virtually everything was out of my price range after having blown my cash on a trunk load of 60s comics. Finally, I spotted a copy of World's Finest from the war years with one of those thick, square spines. It featured Superman, Batman and Robin raking a Victory Garden for the war effort.

Boy, that was a far cry from the stuff they were doing on covers now! It was just a tame, poignant picture of those **heroes doing their part** in a time where it mattered. I decided that this comic was unique because nothing like it was being produced in my time. It was like handling an antique, a vestige of a time I could only visit through my dad's war stories, my imagination…or through comics. I gave the dealer $18 for this obviously hammered copy and left the dealers room with some friends to examine our treasures in a less crowded environment. You know—the movie room!

I opened tanning pages, reflected on the pre-Neal Adams, pre-Bernie Wrightson, cartoony artwork. I have to admit, the stories were a little primitive for me. So, I skipped ahead until I slammed into one of those wartime ads. One of those ads that urged readers to contribute their discards to one of the many product drives to further the war effort. Man, talk about a trip back in time. That just signified everything about that mysterious past that drove my curiosity. It enhanced, for me, the desirability of those 1940s comics. The "antiquity," the significance of a product from another time that I could never visit or experience made them that much more desirable. That desirability made the phenomenon of comic book conventions an important place for me to attend.

From that time I attended many of the conventions that flourished from San Diego to San Francisco. I sought out and purchased certain Golden Age comics for the whole package, ads and all. I became a full-on comic collector, catching DC Comics from the beginning to the present. What fun! Of course, that all changed a few years later when I discovered EC's—but that's another story!

Golden Age sales: Web Of Mystery #22 GD/VG $30; Wonder Comics #12 FN $171.

Silver Age sales: Amazing Spider-Man #2 VG- $400; Fantastic Four #15 FN- $80, #18 FN+ $100, #23 FN $45, #34 VF- $50; Journey Into Mystery #90 VG/F $40; Tales Of Suspense #47 VG $39, #58 VF+ $200.

MICHAEL TIERNEY

THE COMIC BOOK STORE
9307 TREASURE HILL
LITTLE ROCK, AR 72227
501-227-9777

There are a few hard and fast rules about comic collecting that I find myself repeating to customers. **Rule #1**: A comic doesn't have to be old in order to be valuable, and vice versa. If a book is really old but nobody wants it, there is no value. But even when there are thousands copies of something that several hundred thousand people want, such as the bagged Death of Superman or the first issue of Thor by Walter Simonson, it will have a value. Of course, in cases such as these, that value will never increase over time, but this illustrates supply and demand.

Which brings me to **Rule #2**: What sells new determines what sells old. Back issues of Superman, Batman, Captain America, and so many others that are still being published command much higher values than other equally old properties that have been lost in the dust along comic's forgotten road. Just being remembered is not the entire story. Being popular is. There was a time in the 80s when Marvel Comics were the hottest thing on the market and DC Comics were bargains that only a few collectors wanted. Since the days of DC's Crisis on Infinite Earths and Marvel Super-Heroes Secret Wars, those roles have been reversing. I can still sell key Marvels, as long as the price point stays below $50.

Recent **Marvel sales:** Amazing Spider-Man #56 NM $43, #58 VG+ 18; Incredible Hulk #109 VG $9, #116 NM $15, #121 $13; Marvel Team-Up #1 NM $47, #2 VF+ $20, #3 VF $21, #10 VF #9; Sgt. Fury #16 VG $9.75, #33 FN $9, #41 VG $7; Tales of Suspense with prototype Iron Man FR $19; Tales to Astonish #99 VG $10.

Recent **DC sales**: Batman #211 NM $13.50; JLA #42 VF/N $29; Our Army at War #200 FN $14; World's Finest #140 FN $33, #141 FN $43. No sales over $50 for DC either, but titles like World's Finest and Our Army at War were much more difficult to move fifteen years ago.

When the price drops below $10 DC is moving much more briskly than Marvel—especially War and Western comics. In particular, the **Bronze Age** presents scrutinizing buyers with a plethora of choices at prices even lower than modern comics! These overlooked gems have really picked up in demand in recent years as the price of new comics soars and the content becomes thinner in the viewpoint of many older readers. What was once a landmark issue (example: The Legion of Super-Heroes' Ferro Lad dies stopping the Sun-Eater) has become an all summer long cross-over event (Final Night). New comics either create demand for old comics, or they just make them look really good. Still, I'm not going to say that today's comics will never achieve collectability. I remember the popular view of DC comics from twenty years ago. Another rule about comics collecting: just like the stock market, things change!

ROBERT LETSCHER II

KEY COMICS
1318 N EMERSON
MESA, AZ 85201
480-890-0055
KeyComics@hotmail.com

Here's my take on the current back-issue comic market. VERY HOT! **Demand is strong** across most genres and decades, with the only weak decade being 90s product! Outlandish prices paid for CGC graded high-grade books has made non-slabbed books appear to be bargains, spurring demand overall! Common issues, (i.e., Tales of Suspense after #60 in VG) can still be found for below Guide, with relative ease. However, some fans are paying close to VG Guide levels for mere GD copies, so go figure!

Prices are impossible to predict on the **high-grades**. Case in point: An Amazing Spider-Man #122 sells for $900 in CGC 9.6 on eBay, causing much clamor and disbelief among long-term collectors and dealers. So another fan gets his slabbed at 9.6, hoping for a similar amount, only to have his eBay auction close at OVER TWO GRAND! Where will it end?!

Comics with **crossover appeal** sell easily, as the market lines are blurred, with many non-comic-fans buying comics featuring themes or characters of interest. We recently offered a NM- copy of Battle Of The Planets #8 (an uncommon Whitman from 1980) on eBay. A year or two ago, nobody could have cared less that the auction (unslabbed, might I add) closed at $31 plus shipping.

Initial offerings of DC cover production art from the **Jack Adler Collection** have exceeded expectations. Some titles and genres, as well as hot artists, are already climbing over $100 apiece for Approval Covers (aka Cover Proofs), and over $200 apiece on some of the Four-color Separations (aka Progressive Proofs) and the Hand-Colored Covers (aka Color Guides). We expect this trend to continue, as such pieces are almost never brought to market.

It's a great time to be in the hobby, with a diverse selection of books (and fans) in the marketplace!

Here's some specific **sales**, beginning with a few **slabbed** books: New Gods #1 CGC 9.4 $229; Shadow #1 CGC 9.2 $37; JLA #3 CGC 8.0 $505; Tales Of Suspense #72 CGC 8.5 $46; X-Men #40 CGC 9.0 $79.

UN-slabbed comics sold: Battle Of The Planets #8 NM- (Scarce; 3-pack distrib.) $31; Black Cat #31 VF $110; Brave & Bold #59 VF/NM $118; Captain America #110 VF $40; Captain Marvel Adventures #140 FN- $80, #145 VF- $122; Conan #3 VG $34; Famous Funnies #213 FN $362; Fantastic Four #48 VF $850, #49 FN $100, #50 FN+ $125; Looney Tunes #30 GD+ (Liz Taylor panel) $56; Looney Tunes #133 VG- (Tattoo-themed cover) $37; Marvel Family #9 GD $50; Nick Fury #1 NM- $133; Origins of Marvel Comics & Son Of Origins in Slipcase VF $101; Planet Comics #49 VF- $215; Silver Surfer #1 VF $350, #5 VF/NM $100; Strange Tales #110 VG- $95; Superman #8 (missing centerfold, o/w VG-) $300; Tales To Astonish #93 VF $45; X-Men #101 FN $25, #106 VF/NM $50, #119 VF/NM $45, #122, #124 VF/NM $35 each; Zip Comics #14 VG $114.

Here's looking forward to an exciting summer; I expect the convention circuit to be strong. Happy collecting!

RON MURRY

bigroncomics@yahoo.com
PO BOX 4561
FRESNO, CA 93744
1-888-484-0153

I recently received a large batch of the comic books I sent off to **CGC** and I must admit that overall I was quite pleased with

the grades in regards to my own grading. A very large portion came back at least a whole grade higher than I graded them. Here's how I believe that this has happened. I am on a very busy convention schedule. Throughout the day I come into contact with quite a few people. Some of these people are dealers, others are the **collectors and speculators** who usually pay for the privilege to come and gaze upon (and possibly purchase some of) our fine merchandise. Dealers and customers alike want to purchase something from me and there is a process that takes place called haggling. Haggling over a price usually consists of informing someone else about the criteria and reasons for why something is a certain grade and the individual or individuals then give their reasonings in return. In order to reach a happy medium, a compromise is usually achieved. Compromise, I found, has more often than not consisted of lowering my grade to make something more affordable for someone else. In doing so, I have become much more strict and less tolerant to pre-existing conditions that are not really defects, but part of the printing or sales process involved with this kind of collectible.

In my opinion bindery crimps, miscuts, arrival dates, off white paper, staples off center are some of the things that affect the aesthetics, but don't necessarily affect the grade (within the confines of common sense, mind you). CGC has let me know that a lot of the things I was lowering my grades for are not necessarily that bad at all, just points of contention brought up by dealers and customers who want a book at a cheaper price. I usually have very few problems adjusting prices to accommodate an individual, within reason. The people who excessively whine and complain about certain aspects of the books have resulted in my wanting to refuse to budge on certain books just on general principle. With the very high grade on truly scarce books, eBay, Greg Manning or Allstar's auctions just seem to be the best way to go in order give everyone a fair shot at ownership. Haggling is part of the fun, but in today's global economy you might as well let the world decide what something is worth.

A few **sales**: Amazing Fantasy #15 CGC App VG $1240; Amazing Spider-Man #19 VF $142, #25 VF $100; Avengers #4 CGC VF- $740; Brave and Bold #20 FN $122, # 24 FN $100, #22 FN $150; Crack #33 VF $77; Fantastic Four #7 FN $177; Flash #113 FN $100; Hulk #6 FN $200; Jann #13 FN $34; Lorna #14 VF $159; Strange Worlds #5 CGC VF/NM $1530; Tarzan #6 VF $128; Venus #6 FN $137.

JOSEPH SERPICO

CLASSIC COMIC INVESTMENTS

www.classiccomicinvestments.com

With the Overstreet Price Guide coming out in late April, and the convention season kicking off, May-June is usually an interesting period for comic sales. This year was no exception, actually more so, when one factors in the impact of **CGC**. It seems the market has digested and assimilated with a singular caution the overall assessment of what the Guide reported. It is moving along in acceptance of the increases, with maybe only a short pause to catch its breath. I have noticed a steady, slow trend regarding sales for special or classic covers, artists, first appearances, and of course condition. Nothing new there, although as collectors, dealers and other individuals enter and re-enter the market, this trend is accelerating.

On a related note, I have been getting many requests for **very high grade**, NM 9.4 and NM+ 9.6, mid to even late 70s books, such as Ghosts Castle, Weird Mystery Tales, Beowulf (?!!), Stalker, All Star Comics and Plop. Long time collectors on budgets are looking for unusual, different, scarce, weird and uncommon books from this era.

The **Atomic Age** horror and sci-fi books are still blazing hot, with not nearly enough supply to meet demand. I have found that in this market most books sell in a relatively short period of time if priced reasonably. **Pedigrees** are demanding many more multiples of Guide.

I have sold some on eBay, and I am amazed at some of the prices bid, most with no reserve. Buyers should give some serious thought to some of the money being asked for—or bidded against—for some of these newer books. In the long run, many will be very poor investments, probably losers. Methodical searching is usually more satisfying than the impulse purchase and you'll enjoy the collection more in the long term.

Action #205 FN+ $88, #364 VF+ $17; Amazing Fantasy #15 App. FN+ Heavy Restoration $1075; Amazing Spider-Man #29 VF- $76; Aquaman #1 FN- $127; Avengers #1 VG+ $355, #12 NM- $227, #93 NM- $202; Batman #97 FN+ $152, #228 NM- $71; Blondie #26 NM- $61; Conan #1 VF+ $167; Daredevil #17 NM- $187; Detective #233 App. VF- Restored with color touch $146; Famous Funnies #211 VG+ $213; Fantastic Four #3 FN- $430, #65 VF- $22; Fight #19 VF- $163; Green Lantern #1 FN $519, #77 NM- $134, #85 NM+ $274; Hulk #181 VF- $270, #108 NM- $103; Jungle #143 VF $77; Journey into Mystery #9 FN+ $104, #62 App. FN+ Light rest. and color touch $63; Justice League #1 (1987) NM+ $51; Justice League of America #2 VF- $206, #72 NM- $74, #113 NM- $53, #46 NM- $179; Machine Man #1 NM+ $26; Micronauts #1 NM+ $39; New Gods #1 VF+ $34; New Mutants #87 NM+ $36; Planet #62 VF $279; Rocket to the Moon NO nn FN+ $406; Showcase #22 App. FN Moderate rest. $260; Superman #199 NM- $263; Thor #153 NM+ $152, #133 NM- $68; Unusual Tales #1 NM- $209; WDC&S #129 VF- $45; Wonder Woman #72 FN+ $260; X-Men #1 App.VF- Heavy rest. $711, #60 NM- $187.

See you all next market report, 'til then continue collecting!!

TERRY'S COMICS

PO BOX 2232
ORANGE, CA 92859
714-288-2993
terryscomics@webtv.net

The late spring and early summer market has been steady. I attended the Motor City comic convention and an LA Sci-Fi show. Motor City had average sales but I did not break any records. The local Los Angeles show had very good attendance considering it was scheduled on Fathers Day. Sales were above average.

Golden Age sales: Champ #20 VG- $275; Funny Pages V2#7 FN- $250; Suspense Comics #4 GD $450; Wonder #15 VG/FN $375; Yellow Jacket Comics #6 GD/VG $55.

Atomic Age sales: Black Rider Western Tales of (#1)#28 GD/VG $32; Humbug #1 GD/VG $50, #2 VG+ $30, #3 GD $15, #4 GD/VG $22, #5 FN/VF $30, #6 GD/VG $20, #7 VG $26, #8 VG $26, #9 VG $26; Our Fighting Forces #6 GD+ $32; Straight Arrow #1 GD $50, #55 VG- $23; Witches Tales #22 GD/VG $38.

Silver Age sales: Amazing Adult Fantasy #14 GD/VG $68; Fantastic Four #2 GD+ $350; Hulk #2 VG/FN $250; Superman #173 VG+ $12; X-Men #1 VG/FN $1500.

Magazine sales: Heavy Metal V6 #11 NM $5; RBCC #138 VF $8; Scary Monsters Presents #1 NM $10.

TOM GORDON

MONUMENTAL COLLECTIBLES
PO BOX 295
REISTERSTOWN, MD 21136
410-848-0275
www.monumentalcollectibles.com
Moncollect@aol.com

One of the great things with summer is the number of large comic auctions. There are numerous comic related movies this summer and time will tell if these movies have any great effect on demand for the related comics. Last but not least are all the comic cons this summer. The comic cons are one of the great events in the summer as one can not only purchase items for their collections, but also meet the great people who create our favorite titles. Greg Manning Comic Auctions recently wrapped up their spring auction and it appears that the demand for high grade and CGC graded books via auctions is continuing to remain strong. **Golden Age** comics in all grades continue to move. We are seeing lower grade books selling well, especially books that grade good to poor. These books are very affordable to the collector and also those who wish to read them. **Silver Age** is selling well and we are seeing growing demand in the Spider-Man title as the movie approaches. **Platinum Age** collectors are continuing to hunt down those elusive vintage comics. Recently a copy of the 1849 Adventuers Of Mr. Obadiah Oldbuck appeared on **eBay**. This book is considered Very Rare according to the Price Guide and sold for almost two hundred dollars in poor condition. Anyone interested in learning more about Platinum Age comics should check out the Platinum Age Comics Newsletter:
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PlatinumAgeComics.

Character Toys and **Premiums** are continuing to sell well although the prices seem to have slightly cooled regarding vintage Star Wars toys. We are seeing interest in some of the 1980s toys such as M.A.S.K., Thunder Cats, etc. We are also being asked by Transformer toy collectors for the Marvel comic books. It appears that these books are not turning up as easily as some toy collectors had hoped. These books will become even tougher once the new cartoon series debuts in the fall. Character premiums continue to sell well when either fairly priced or when offering something unusual. Comic and original art is selling well with some collectors finding it difficult to pay prices that several years ago seemed impossible to obtain.

Golden Age sales: Jungle #2 FR $93.50; Kolynos White Guard Dentist Giveaway Comic NM $12; Sheena #8 GD+$45.

Character Toys and **Premiums**: Doc Savage Pulp Nov. 1940 Vol. XVI No. 3 $46.75; Hi-Yo Supplee Lone Rangers Newsletter 1940 NM $42.76; Popeye 1940s Letterhead $40; Tom Mix RCA Radio Viewer NM $15.50.

TED VAN LIEU

SUPERWORLD COMICS
508-754-0792
Lvanlieu@aol.com

The new Price Guide has come out, and many high-grade prices have spiked up as much as 20% in the listing. That, combined with the gradual slowdown in our national economy has contributed to a bit of resistance on some books. It's funny, because the **real market value** of these books has been at least that for some time. When it's laid out in black & white, though, it seems to freak people out. The psychology of this hobby is a funny thing! Keys of any kind, especially Silver Age and 70s, will always sell instantly. They're seen as can't miss items. When we get collectors filling in runs, it seems that they're concentrating on one or two titles primarily and one of those titles is often Spider-Man. Anything **high grade** is desirable. Another curious aspect of the marketplace is that with all the interest in and high prices paid for nice CGC material, the action is centered on Silver Age books, especially Marvels. Golden Age books, which are several times scarcer, especially in high grade (if there is a high grade copy at all), don't get nearly the interest. Perhaps this is due to the fact that most of the avid collectors are in a certain age group and most fondly remember the 'Marvel Age of Comics.' Way to go Stan! Comics in 'regular' grades, from Good to Very Fine, are relatively unaffected by newer trends in the marketplace, and remain very stable. With the focus being on superhero comics, **other types of books**, such as TV, funny animal, Charlton and others have spotty interest, with devoted collectors filling in gaps. Once in a while, someone will discover one of the cooler examples of one of these books, and realize there's a vast untapped well of quality material to discover. Horror comics, both pre-code and later, have slowed in popularity. They were the 'hot' item for a while, and now are in the down cycle. We fully anticipate their popularity to bounce back. **Science Fiction & Atomic Age** themed comics are steady as always. Fans who have an eye for Sci-Fi and Fantasy will always get a charge out of them. Issues with nuclear blast covers are especially popular. Must appeal to the dark, self-destructive area of our psyche.

Some examples of **recent sales**: 80-Pg Giant #7 FN $65; Action #89 VG+ $215; All American Men of War #24 VF+ $110; All Select #6 VG $325; Amazing Adventures #11 VF/NM $85; Amazing Spider-Man #101 NM $185, #124 NM- $48; Batman #181 NM+ $350; Captain America #111 VF/NM $60; Journey Into Mystery #83 FR $160; Star Spangled #83 VF $300; Tales to Astonish #64 NM- $75; Whiz #32 GD/VG $55.

Opinions expressed in CBM Market Reports are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Prices vary by location, date of transaction and other factors.

ANSWERS TO JUNIOR EDITOR QUIZ

(pages 36 - 43)

1. "years of 1901 to 1981" should be "1951 to 1981"
2. "Basil Wolverton, Jake Kirby, Alex Toth" should read "Basil Wolverton, Jack Kirby, Alex Toth"
3. and 4. On Figure 11, the cutline "art in *Flop* #4, April 2, 1974." should read "art in *Plop* #4, April 1974."
5. Figure 12 was followed by Figure 14, the Figure 13 was forgotten—or was it?
6. "There are 6 mistakes" should read "There are 5 mistakes,"—editors just can't win!

Who's buying The Spirit Archives?

A quick and very unscientific survey

by Bill Baker

With the hope of garnering some kind of idea of who the typical buyer of The Spirit Archives might be, and how well they're selling in various areas of the country, we contacted several major retailers and posed them a series of short questions. In essence, we asked them how well the series was selling at their outlets, who was buying them, and if there were any customer comments that stood out in their minds. The resulting answers were as varied and individual as their stores and clientele are...

Buddy Saunders, the top hombre behind the Lone Star Comics chain in Texas, said that, "The Eisner books are **not big sellers** for us. We have a few older collectors who are avid Eisner fans. They buy any new item that is released, including the hardback reprint collections," but continued by noting that, sadly, "Among younger fans and creators we are seeing almost no interest in Eisner, which is a real pity."

Meanwhile, Brian Hibbs, owner of Comix Experience in San Francisco, happily informed us that at his store The Spirit "Archives are selling **very well**; roughly twice as well as the 'regular' DC" editions featuring other heroes, and happily stated that, "as for who is buying ... it's just people! New folks, older folks both."

Hibbs concluded by saying that these hefty volumes, "Haven't gotten any particular comments other than [it's] 'nice to have this material, finally'. One or two people wish that the series had started with the 'better'—[meaning] the post-war period [strips]—but they seem in it for the long haul."

Elsewhere on the West Coast, at the shop that coincidentally won the prestigious Will Eisner Spirit of Comics Retailer Award in 1995, owner Joe Fields enthused that "The Spirit Archives are **selling better** here at Flying Colors than any of DC Archives series, selling **about double** what the next best Archive sells. We've been selling most of the books to long-time fans of the comics medium; some are buying Eisner for the first time, others bought all the other Kitchen Sink Eisner Spirit comics but want better editions in a more historical, linear context." As far as who is typically picking up these books, he offered the observation that, "I'd say the **average age** of the Eisner The Spirit Archive buyer is 35...and almost exclusively male."

Fields also reported that the general reaction has been very positive, and has even prompted quite a few conversations concerning Eisner's ubiquitous influence upon the medium and it's practitioners. "Even those who are familiar with Eisner's work see The Spirit Archives as a history lesson of the comics medium. We've received comments from some readers who finally see that Eisner has influenced many cartoonists, [ranging from those] who worked with him, like Mike Ploog and Wally Wood, [as well as] some who haven't worked with him, like Frank Miller and Rick Veitch."

Chuck Rozanski, the owner of the Mile High Comics chain of comic shops and a highly successful mail order service, was perhaps even more enthusiastic and committed to The Spirit Archives than most retailers, which seems to have had a fairly dramatic positive effect on his overall sales of the series. "The Spirit Archives books have **sold far better** for us than originally expected. In fact, I think they've outsold all the DC material! I believe we sold nearly 200 copies of the first book, and over 100 each of subsequent books. The first book sold better because I liked the idea of the book so much that I offered a 50% discount (!) to get people to try Eisner's material."

Unfortunately, Rozanski was unable to relay any comments from his customers, due to the simple fact that, in total, "Our sales are about 80% by mail, so **feedback is rare**. I know they like them, however, because they keep buying them." He also was unable to offer any insight as to who the typical buyer of The Spirit Archives at Mile High Comics might be because "we do not have demographic profiles of our subscribers..."

However, he did offer this personal anecdote: "I've been an Eisner fan for nearly 30 years. I still have the complete run of the 'Mile High' Spirit issues from Quality, plus the run from Fiction House. That was the only 'Mile High' series I didn't sell back in the 1980s."

Now that's a real committed fan! Any of the above retailers or their representatives may be contacted at:

Buddy Saunders
Lone Star Comics
511 E. Abram St.
Arlington, TX 76010
817.860.7827
817.860.2769 [fax]
buddy@lonestarcomics.com
http://www.mycomicshop.com/

Brian Hibbs
Comix Experience
305 Divisadero St.
San Francisco, CA 94117
415.863.9258
415.863.9299 [fax]
comicexperience@pacbell.net
www.comixexperience.com

Joe Field
Flying Colors Comics & Other Cool Stuff
2980 Treat Blvd.
Concord, CA 94518
925-825-5410
joe@flyingcolorscomics.com

Chuck Rozanski
Mile High Comics
2151 West 56th Ave.
Denver, CO 80221
800.676.6423 8 am - 5 pm MST
303.477.5315 [fax]
www.milehighcomics.com

A MODEST PROPOSAL

by Jon Berk

"Restoration." Is there a word that provokes more "fear" and "misunderstanding" as this term is applied to comic books? Neophytes to the comic book arena are constantly warned to beware buying restored books. Even many "experienced" collectors have varying views and ignorance as to what exactly "restoration" is. In my estimation, a frenzy has been created that many will presume a book has been restored so to avoid appearing uninformed or taken advantage of.

The hobby of comic book collecting continues to grow and evolve. Record-breaking prices are being set for a number of books. However, even at this stage of the hobby, knowledge as to the varying degrees of "restoration" and the corresponding pricing of "restored" books is ill-defined and inconsistent. What does it mean that a book is "restored"? How does it affect pricing? Is it affected by whether it is a golden age or silver age book? If it is a Mile High (Church) book is a different standard applied?

This issue, while always a subject of backroom discussions, appears to be creeping into the public forum. In the recent *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* (pages 205-206), Comic Guaranty, LLC, which is providing grading and restoration detection services, raises questions about certain forms of "restoration" as affecting grading and desirability of a book. Although not voicing an "opinion" per se, it is clear that the thrust of the article is to question why certain "enhancing restoration" should be considered in a negative light.

In a preceding article in the same book, the *Guide* addresses (but does not give ultimate "guidance") the issue by employing words such as "repair" as opposed to restoration and "non-additive" restoration and "preventive techniques". The *Guide* then states the obvious: the more restoration that is performed, the less the value of the book compared to its apparent grade value. The *Guide* concludes, after giving some rough valuations guidelines for certain age comic books, that the price realized varies on the demand and availability of a particular book. A difficult subject? Of course. These articles are initiating a long overdue public discussion as to the effect of "restoration" on pricing and whether, under certain circumstance, certain forms of "restoration" affect pricing at all.

The June auction for Greg Manning Auctions reflects the "confusion" and lack of institutional guidance in the area of "restoration." For instance, for the Church copy of *More Fun* 52 (Item 2278), the book is given a CGC "universal grade" of NM-. However, it is noted that the book has "very minor" glue and "very minor" color touch. Yet *Captain America* 1 (Item 2707) is given a CGC "restored grade" of VF- for a "very small" amount of color touch and a piece of tape removed. (Please tell me why CGC will not identify where the "minor" color touch isósee item 2720 in the Manning Auction.) Finally, *Batman* 1 (Item 2187) is listed as an apparent NM-. The description indicates that the book has had a "light" water cleaning and pressing. "Nothing has been added to this copy, thus it is completely non-restored." Confused?

Why this spin of verbiage?

Simple. These otherwise beautiful books (but, more importantly, big buck books) have "only" had "minor" things "done" to them. The seller does not want the price to be affected significantly. But if this spin is appropriate for these books why not for other non-keys? A book is restored/non-additive restored/repaired, or it is not. What is "very minor" color touch as opposed to "very small" amount of color touch? How much is needed to make it "minor" color touch or "moderate"? Is a book that that has been cleaned not restored?

Okay, maybe not, "because, nothing has been added to it." But does it make a difference if the book must be disassembled so that the "cleaned" book is not in the "original" assembled published condition? I do not know. But it appears to turn on whose ox is being protected or gored (i.e. if you are selling or buying).

A modest proposal if you please. It is time for the hobby to define types, as well as degree, of restoration. What makes it "repairs"? What makes it "non-additive restoration"? What makes it "minor" restoration or "moderate" or "heavy"? How does a particular "action" performed on a book affect its price or should affect its price? I propose that the appropriate entities in the hobby send out surveys to the leading restorers in the hobby and have them list all types of work that can be performed on a book and what they consider to be "repair," preventative repair (tape removal), restoration, etc. What do they consider makes it "very" minor or minor or moderate work. Which do they consider most intrusive to the book? A decision has to be made about tear seals. Is it the length of the seal or other measures that determine the "nomenclature" that we see so often used in sales? What if repair/restoration is "reversed"? Let the hobby develop accepted categories for the terms so freely bandied about. Also, although a book has been "restored," how significant is it to the book? All of this should (with admitted difficulty) be institutionalized into categories and, perhaps, lead to the creation of a Restoration Scale of R-0 to R-10 (or any number). If a book can be so classified maybe the hobby can "institutionalize" for the non-high demand non-pedigree books (as opposed to high demand/pedigree books that seem more impervious to such "defects") as to how the R value affects price. Such a dialogue conducted in an organized and informed fashion (as opposed to pre-conceived dogma of the select few) is long overdue and will add to the continued growth of the hobby.

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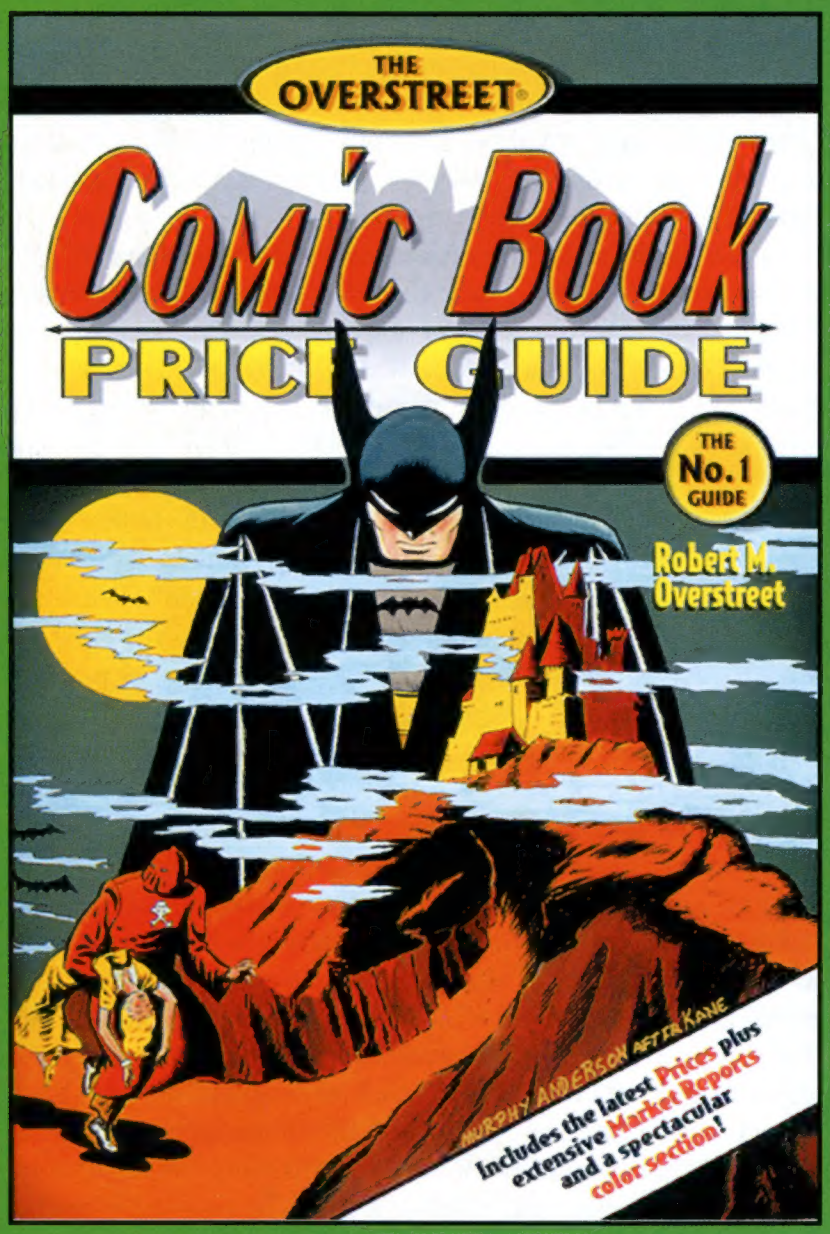
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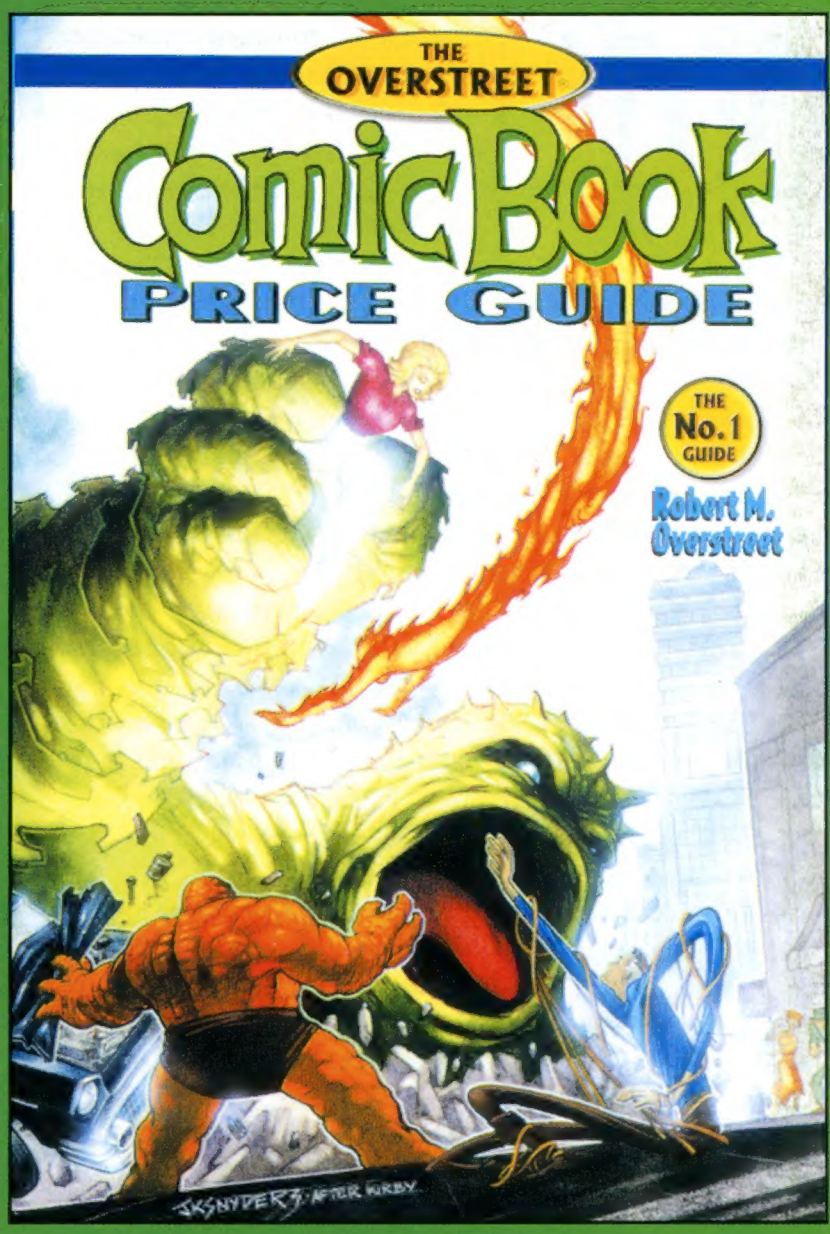

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